

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AS A DECOLONIZING METHOD

-THE NISGA'A EXPERIENCE-

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to depict how Aboriginal people in Canada were colonized through education, and how Aboriginal-controlled education can be a method for decolonization. The Nisga'a struggle is employed as a case.

This study addresses the following three research questions:

1. What is the Nisga'a definition of Indian control of Indian education?
2. What do the Nisga'a see as an ideal or model of education for themselves?
3. What do the Nisga'a see as viable strategies to overcome current problems in reaching their model education system?

In 1975, the Nisga'a established their own school district in the Nass Valley, their traditional territory, where the Nisga'a culture has been preserved. Prior to the inception of their school district, Nisga'a children were sent to residential schools, and later, to provincial secondary schools outside of the Nass Valley. The colonial education they received there brought many negative effects to the Nisga'a culture and social system.

The Nisga'a struggle against colonization started as early as the nineteenth century in the context of the Nisga'a land questions. Decolonization in the education field started in the early 1950s. Since then, the Nisga'a struggle for more control of education has been ceaseless. People's consciousness and vision of decolonization led the Nisga'a to establish their own school district, a move that brought enormous positive effects to Nisga'a children.

By operating a provincial school district, however, the Nisga'a have several problems associated with the continued presence of non-Aboriginal structures, methods, content, and so forth. Although the Nisga'a have a clear vision of their ideal of education, these problems prevent the Nisga'a from having full control over their education. This study comes to see that the

curriculum issue is one of the most fundamental issues in Nisga'a control of education. This thesis argues that for decolonization through education to be effective, rethinking of the institutionalization of education must occur. It also focuses on the Nisga'a traditional educational philosophy where a person is in progress throughout his or her life. It concludes that the Nisga'a have a major contribution to make to pedagogy in mainstream society.

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CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will first explain how my interest in this study originated in my past personal experience, and how I started my field research. Subsequently, I will give information about the Nisga'a Nation where I conducted my field study.

INTRODUCTION

As a Japanese, I experienced rapid modernization since I was a little child. During modernization, people's lives were improved. However, as modernization went on, Japanese traditional culture, including values, social structures, and knowledge, started to be considered anachronistic. Now, many Japanese agree that modernization in Japan has been realized at the expense of a good portion of our tradition.

I asked myself what we can call this phenomenon of trying to catch up to the West by abandoning one's own cultural values. I could not define what had happened in my culture in the last few decades. I vaguely thought that it was some kind of colonization. When I read a chapter written by Hiroshi Yoshioka, however, I found a term that made a strong impression: "self-colonization." He stated:

I see the whole situation under the hypothesis that Japan's strength was attained at the cost of a certain distortion in its cultural and psychological structure. In the course of rapid Westernization, Japan experienced radical change in its cultural system ... But Westernization in Japan is not a process of intrusion of the other, but a kind of simulation done by Japanese people themselves. In the process of simulation information can be taken in without

confronting any counterpart in another culture (Yoshioka 1995:100-101).

Self-colonization was the word that I was looking for to explain what had happened to the Japanese culture.

My past experience as a Japanese person in Japanese culture led me to First Nations Studies. There were some things that I could see in Aboriginal people that helped me understand and clarify issues in my mind, such as traditional culture versus modern society, learning in a culture versus studying in an institution, and development versus devastation. However, this does not mean that Japanese and Aboriginal people have had the same experience, or that the Japanese can share with Aboriginal people a way of escaping from some kind of colonization.

I wanted to know how Aboriginal people in Canada have struggled with colonization, and wanted to learn something from them so that I could make some contribution towards a more humanistic world. This study is not intended as "empirical generalizations, the production of law-like statements, or the establishment of functional relationships" (van Manen 1990:22). Rather, it is part of my life-long learning *from* and *with* but not *about* people.

Another experience in my past was evoked when I was writing a paper about the history of Aboriginal people's education in Canada for a graduate course in First Nations Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). I suddenly remembered my experience of working in China and South Korea as a trained language teacher. These countries were former colonies of Japan. In both countries I met many elderly people who were fluent speakers of my language. In South Korea, some of them told me that they had not been able to speak their mother language when their country had become independent, because they had been educated in Japanese since their childhood.

According to a Japanese proverb, "a three-year-old child's spirit will be with the child even when the child becomes 100 years old." If a person is colonized in his or her childhood, the effects of colonization may last for the rest of the person's life. It was a colonial education that produced the fluent speakers of the colonizer's language. The same thing happened in Canada as well. Aboriginal people were forced to learn and use the colonizer's language through colonial education. That was a starting point for me to think about the relationship between colonization and education, and later, decolonization and education. I started to think that education might be an important key for decolonization. I also remembered that I had been impressed by the profound knowledge of old Chinese people in China. Some of them were almost illiterate, but they had their profound knowledge about life, nature and the world, none of it taught in a formal educational system. This is one of the things that the Japanese have lost in their thrust towards modernization.

I knew, from past studies, that Aboriginal people in North America had the same kind of profound knowledge of life, nature, and the world. I wondered whether that kind of knowledge was destined to disappear when people thought that formal education was the only way to lead children to a promised future. If that kind of profound knowledge could be passed on to the next generation, it might contribute to decolonization.

Thus, actual colonization and self-colonization, which appeared in the modernization of Japan, led me to the notion of decolonization. Although the complexity of colonization has left decolonization lacking a clear focus (Pieterse and Parekh 1995:2-3), education is one of the powerful methods of colonization, and also seems likely to be a method of decolonization.

I have wondered if there is any possibility of education in which we can look closely at our life values, and reflect a good portion of our traditions. If

education has transmitted dominant ideology to young people, it might also foster decolonization. This thesis is based on the hypothesis that education can be used as a decolonizing method.

As described above, my experience in the past led me to this study. The nature of this study can be described by the following statement by van Manen about phenomenology, although this study is not a phenomenological study:

[P]henomenology is the study of the lifeworld – the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it. Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences (1990:9).

I have to emphasize again that citing van Manen here does not mean that my study is a phenomenological study. Rather, what I want to express is that it was my pre-reflective experience that led me to this study, and that I want to seek, through this study, more direct contact with the world where I am living. Van Manen states, "In the human sciences, objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive categories." He continues, "Subjectivity means that we are *strong* in our orientation to the object of study *in a unique and personal way*" (1990:20). I hope that I am strong enough so that I can avoid "the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-indulgent, or of getting captivated and carried away by our unreflected preconceptions" (van Manen 1990:20).

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

Historically, education has often been utilized as a method of colonization. Education, while providing the learner with social and economic opportunities, contributes to the domination and exclusion of some people (Wotherspoon 1991:249). Michael W. Apple and Linda K. Christian-Smith state:

For some groups of people, schooling is seen as a vast engine of democracy-opening horizons, ensuring mobility, and so on. For others, the reality of schooling is strikingly different. It is seen as a form of social control or, perhaps, as the embodiment of cultural dangers, institutions whose curricula and teaching practices threaten the moral universe of the students who attend them (1991:1).

In Canada, colonization policies have worked towards assimilation of Aboriginal people partly through school education in which Aboriginal people were denied their culture (Tobias 1983:48; Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:6). The Canadian government "employed education as a means to transform Indian social existence from a state of relative self-sufficiency to an increasingly marginalized position within a national context" (Wotherspoon 1991:249).

As Wotherspoon's "marginalized position" indicates, despite the government's policy, assimilation of Aboriginal people was not successful. Aboriginal people have been put into a situation where they could not live satisfactorily either in an Aboriginal culture or in the dominant culture (Ed John, a chief from the Carrier Sekani, March 18, 1996). Bert McKay also states, "They [Nisga'a students] were neither white nor Nisga'a. They were in between, in sort of a vacuum" (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993:5).

However, school education produced what was far worse than the marginalized position for many Aboriginal people. To describe the violence that school education brought, Randy Fred uses the term "genocide," and differentiates between two forms, intentional and unintentional. According to him, the residential school was a case of intentional cultural genocide. He also explains how, as was typical of the residential schools, "[t]he elimination of language has always been a primary stage in a process of cultural genocide" (1988:15).

The existence of many generations as wards of the crown and the control of the colonial education process disempowered Aboriginal people, and destroyed the positive and strong identity of their children. Aboriginal people, however, have not simply remained passive in the face of the power of colonization. Wotherspoon notes, "... a strict emphasis on education for colonization tends to assume that once colonial authority is accomplished it is maintained with little resistance or variation over time" (1991:252). On the contrary, Haig-Brown describes the resistance of Aboriginal students who attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School and concludes:

The students in their wisdom recognized the injustice of the system which attempted to control them and to transform them ... This strength has led to today's work in education by Native people throughout British Columbia (1988:126).

Today, numerous Aboriginal groups strive to restore their culture and reestablish children's identity. They attempt to realize this partly by controlling the education of their children. Education controlled by Aboriginal people is an indispensable element for decolonization, as well as for the acquisition of political power. "[N]o educational practice takes place in a vacuum, only in a real context – historical, economic, political" (Freire 1985:12). Education which was used as a method of colonization is now used by Aboriginal groups for the purpose of decolonization.

For example, today, numerous Aboriginal groups are desperately trying to develop language teaching materials and collect old stories before the last generation of fluent Aboriginal language speakers passes away. This effort, however, is still only the first step to decolonization, since, as Randy Fred states, "the thrust should be, 'Education into Culture, not Culture into Education'" (1988:24). Also, the goal must be "language recovery rather than language

teaching" (Jeannette Armstrong, an Aboriginal writer from the Okanagan, March 31, 1995).

Since the term "culture" has various interpretations, and also is an important term in this study, it is necessary to define the term that is used in this study. Celia Haig-Brown (1995:18) describes culture as socially constructed in people's interactions historically and contemporarily, and not static. However, citing Stenhouse, Haig-Brown argues that it is important to assert what culture does, not what it is (1995:18). Haig-Brown quotes Stenhouse who stated:

Culture serves as a medium through which individual human minds interact with one another in communication ... It is a dynamic field within and through which individuals make contact with one another. It lies, as it were, between people and is shared by them ... To live within culture is to be able to understand, albeit in a partial way, the experience of those around us (1995:18).

In my own words, I would like to say that culture is people's common knowledge which both serves and derives from their communication in their lives. Culture includes the language, values, and skills that a group of people share. Some people tend to focus on a tangible item to discuss culture. For example, some people may say that a totem pole signifies a culture. In my definition, it is true when a totem pole is standing in a village of a people who carved it. That totem pole is a reified form of people's knowledge, and people from that culture need to interact with that artifact to explain its significance and value. However, when a totem pole is standing in another culture, people in that culture are not able to communicate with that totem pole. For example, I have seen a big totem pole in an anthropology museum in Japan. It was standing among many other fragments of cultures from various regions. That totem pole was cut off from the people's knowledge and values that had created it. In my definition, that totem pole was just a carved tree or a sign which we can not understand.

OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY

As I described above, my past experience and research convinced me that education can be a very important key for decolonization of Aboriginal people. The objective of my thesis is to examine the possibilities of education for decolonization of Aboriginal people. However, it is important to avoid generalizing about Aboriginal people who have varied cultures and historical backgrounds and who are in different stages of controlling their education. It is also assumed that different Aboriginal groups have different goals and ideals for their education. Therefore, the study focuses on one Aboriginal group, the Nisga'a, residing in the northwestern part of British Columbia.

I will focus on how Nisga'a control of education is an important step for decolonization. The study addresses the following questions:

1. What is the Nisga'a's definition of Indian control of Indian education?
2. What do the Nisga'a see as an ideal or model education for themselves?
3. What do the Nisga'a see as viable strategies to overcome current problems in reaching their model educational system?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I visited the Nass Valley for the first time during a field trip held in March of 1995 for the graduate students in First Nations Studies at UNBC. In 1975, the Nisga'a had established their own School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) in the Nass Valley, their traditional territory, where their traditional culture has been preserved and practiced. In other words, the Nisga'a brought the public school system, a non-Aboriginal educational system, into their cultural ground. This unique situation of Nisga'a control of education attracted my interest.

In May of 1995, I came into personal contact with the Nisga'a through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Deanna Nyce, of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (Nisga'a House of Wisdom, WWN), a post-secondary institution. I had the idea of completing my Internship Programme, required by the First Nations Studies Programme at UNBC, in the Nass Valley.

Since I had been a trained language teacher of the Japanese language, my main interest for my Internship Programme was language education in the Nass Valley. I spent one month during the spring of 1995 in the village of New Aiyansh (described later). I worked with language teachers and had an opportunity to observe the existing language and culture courses by attending those classes. The director of the School District No. 92's Nisga'a Language and Culture Centre gave me an opportunity to observe the hard work of curriculum development. The Internship Programme became a very useful and important step for my second field study in the Nass Valley.

In September of 1995, I contacted School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) and the WWN, again through the CEO. I asked the Nisga'a authorities to approve my thesis proposal to conduct a field study on Nisga'a education in Nisga'a society. The proposal was approved quickly and I started a two-month field study on 16 October, 1995.

The letter of approval from the superintendent of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) was very impressive. It said, "[T]hey [the Nisga'a] are anxious to support the input for the overall thesis writing, so the children of the Nass Valley will benefit from your sincere efforts." In the letter, I saw clear evidence of what I had heard many times, which was Aboriginal people were working for future generations constantly.

Participant observation was employed as a research method as well as a formal interview was more prominent than usual. I stayed at a Bed and

Breakfast owned and operated by Lorene Plante, a Nisga'a who is an interim board member of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (WWN) and could offer helpful cultural information.

My field study started with the celebration of an opening of a new bridge to Gitwinksihlkw (described later) and a totem pole raising. Four totem poles representing the four clans of the Nisga'a had been erected on each corner of the bridge. The new bridge was officially opened with an unveiling ceremony of the four totem poles. On the same day, another totem pole in the school yard of the elementary school in Gitwinksihlkw was traditionally raised, and a totem pole raising feast was held in the community hall. It was a big celebration of feasting and gift giving, often referred to as a potlatch, with songs and dances.

I also attended several different kinds of feasts, which provided invaluable experiences for understanding the Nisga'a culture. Lorene Plante took me to many of these feasts and explained what was happening. Since I attended the feasts as an ordinary guest, not as a researcher, I did not take notes at the feasts. So that I would not forget the names of important people in a feast, I used a very small notebook to write them down, and kept it in a pocket. Since many Nisga'a brought cameras and video cameras into the feasts, I also brought them.

The most difficult thing for me in attending the feasts was that I could not understand what people were saying, because most of the speeches were made in the Nisga'a language. However, sometimes people sitting around me interpreted the speeches for me. In addition, when Dr. Marie-Lucie Tarpent, a linguist on sabbatical from Mount Saint Vincent University, who works for the Nisga'a and was then teaching at the WWN, was with me, she interpreted the speeches for me. However, this does not mean that the Nisga'a use their mother language on a daily basis. Their daily language is English except for occasional uses of some Nisga'a words. Also, even if some people are fluent in the Nisga'a

language in ceremonial speeches, they may or may not be fluent speakers in daily communication.

Since I had spent one month in the Nass Valley during the spring, I already knew many people when I started my field study. In addition, the CEO of the WWN introduced me to people at a three-day annual education convention that started on the day after my arrival. This helped me very much as it introduced me to the people with whom I wanted to make appointments to interview people working in the education field.

I interviewed people who were working in various fields of education and/or parents, students, and community representatives (see Appendix 1). Initially, I made a list of people who I planned to interview. Deanna Nyce, the CEO of the WWN and also a member of my Graduate Committee, suggested persons to be added to the list. In addition to the core interview questions described below, the interview participants were asked supplemental questions appropriate to their relationship to the issue of Nisga'a education.

The three broad research questions were transformed into the following more specific interview questions:

- a. What is Indian control of Indian education for you?
- b. Do you think the Nisga'a have full control of education?
If not, why and what are the obstacles?
- c. What is your ideal of education in the Nass valley?
- d. To achieve your ideal goal, what do you think has to be done?

The interviewees were asked to read and sign a consent letter (see Appendix 2), or orally asked if they were willing to be identified in my thesis either before or after the interviews. In the case of the interviews with students, I tried to send a consent letter to their parents, but it was not successful. I received only two responses to the letter. A secretary of the Nisga'a Elementary

Secondary School (NESS) then offered to phone the parents to inform them about the interview.

The interviews were held with one person at a time. All the interviewees were very enthusiastic, and the interviews were very lively and made a strong impression on me. One time I asked a woman what she thought of having the Nisga'a school in her own community. Comparing today's situation with her childhood at a residential school, she said that having the schools in the valley was wonderful. I noticed a change of tone in her voice. She was almost crying. I imagined how wonderful having their own schools was for the people who were sent away to residential schools, and I became emotional. I also almost cried. The woman said softly, "Oh, go ahead and cry ... I do that all the time." People's voices were very powerful.

Each interview was tape recorded with the permission of the interviewee. The main reason for tape recording was that English is my second language. In order to collect information without omissions, I tape recorded the interview.

The first step after the interviews was transcribing the interview tapes. I tried to transcribe as closely to how people responded as possible. The next step was sorting all the responses according to the interview questions that were asked (see Appendix 3). I read responses carefully looking for answers to the questions. I would not like to call this process "an analysis." Instead, I would like to call the process "reflection."

A copy of the interview tapes and transcriptions was submitted to the WWN and stored in a secure and protected place. Since there was personal information in the interview, I made edited tapes and transcriptions for submission to the WWN and School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) to be used in public.

PROFILE OF THE NISGA'A

The Nisga'a have resided in the Nass River Valley of northwestern British Columbia, as many Nisga'a state, "since time immemorial." The population of the Nisga'a in 1993 was about 6,000. 2,500 people out of 6,000 live in the four Nisga'a villages in their traditional territory: Gingolx (Kincolith), Lakalzap (Greenville), Gitwinksihlkw (Canyon City), and Gitlakdamiks (New Aiyansh). Another 3,500 people live elsewhere in Canada and around the world (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993:1). Among these four, Gitwinksihlkw uses this traditional name as an official village name.

Kincolith and Aiyansh (Old Aiyansh) were established by missionaries in the late nineteenth century. Originally, Gitlakdamiks and Aiyansh were two different villages on the north bank of the Nass River. When Robert Tomlinson, an Anglican missionary, arrived in the area, he started Aiyansh less than three kilometers from Gitlakdamiks "[r]ather than attempt to win over Gitlakdamiks" which, in his eyes, had "'undesirable' influences of the native culture" (Patterson 1982:116). When Aiyansh was flooded in 1960, the village was moved across the river to what is called New Aiyansh today (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993:1).

New Aiyansh is located 112 kilometers northwest of Terrace, British Columbia. This village is the biggest of the four villages and where most of the research was done. The location of Gitwinksihlkw is 16 kilometers west of New Aiyansh. Until October 1995, this village was accessible only by a suspension bridge over the Nass River. Now there is a commercial bridge that can be crossed by car. Greenville, the second largest village, is located 48 kilometers southwest of New Aiyansh. Kincolith is 40 kilometers west of Greenville and located at the mouth of the Nass River.

Each village has a band council, and the Nisga'a Tribal Council, located in New Aiyansh, consists of "all of the executives of the four band councils and the ranking chieftains of the four clans" (McKay and McKay 1987:66). Besides the four villages, Nass Camp, a company logging town, is also home to many Nisga'a who are not separated from the Nisga'a cultural and political structures.

The Nisga'a live in a matrilineal society that has four clans: Gisk'ahaast (Killer Whale), Laxgibuu (Wolf), Ganada (Raven) and Laxsgiik (Eagle). Each clan has several Houses, which are called "Wilps" in Nisga'a, under the clan. Traditionally, when a baby is born, the baby is a member of a House, a clan, and the Nisga'a Nation as well as a nuclear family (Nisga'a Language and Culture Centre 1995).

A clan originally consisted of a group of people who had a collective name, and shared the same history up to the point when the people set up separate Houses. Houses are ranked within clans and the headman of the highest House in a clan is chief. A Nisga'a name, House, clan, and the status of the chief are passed on to the next generation through the matrilineage (McNeary 1976:14, Allison Nyce, a Nisga'a graduate from University of British Columbia in Anthropology, pers. comm. June 6, 1995). Dennis Nyce, a totem pole carver from Gitwinksihlkw, stated:

[A]lthough our people may come and go ... they die, but the name never dies ... We have stories about the time that our people, the Nisga'a people, lived in darkness before the coming of light. We have the stories, so these are how old these names are. [They are] very old names (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 18).

Nisga'a Education: Historical Change

Prior to European contact, "education was the aboriginal right of the Nisga'a parents, of the extended family (especially maternal uncles and aunts), and of the members of the individual's clan" (McKay and McKay 1987:66). The concept of the family among the Nisga'a is radically different from that of present-day Western countries where the nuclear family is a principal form of the family. Alvin McKay, the superintendent of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) from Greenville, stated in an interview:

... these are my sister's children, my first cousin's children. I've got nieces and nephews, and then they now have children. So their children are my grandnephews and grandnieces, and they are all from our Wilp ... I'm a grandfather to all of them (Nov. 10, 1995: Tape No. 7).

The traditional Nisga'a way of teaching children was to enhance the qualities and talents of the children through practical training. Girls were as valuable as boys in the Nisga'a tradition. There was special training for girls by the grandmother and the mother, "a practical teaching of how to take care of the household and be creative" (Percy Tait, a Nisga'a Anglican priest, Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 24). One of the important roles of the grandmother was to pass on, orally, the traditions, such as the Ayuukhl Nisga'a (the Nisga'a Law) so that they would not be lost or broken (Percy Tait Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 24).

Education for the boys was initially done by the adults by carefully observing the child. The adult watched the best in the child and then placed the child with someone who had already been recognized as a specialist for his

specific skill and knowledge (Dennis Nyce Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 18). The Nisga'a did not train all the children to be the same, because "all of them cannot be all good hunters. Some of them are good for something else" (Percy Tait Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 24). Every person had a valuable contribution to make to the Nisga'a Nation through the person's qualities, knowledge, and wisdom.

European formal education was introduced to the Nass Valley with the arrival of the missionaries in the late 1860s. Education provided by the missionaries under the sponsorship of the Anglican Church Missionary Society was attractive to many Nisga'a, and the people were eager to learn English (McNeary 1976:33). School was one of the advantages that the Nisga'a expected from the missionaries. When Robert Tomlinson came to the Nass River in 1867, he established a school in Kincolith shortly after his arrival (Patterson 1982:50). When Henry Schutt, an Anglican missionary, visited Aiyansh in September of 1879, where Robert Tomlinson had been living since 1878, that village had a new school house (Patterson 1982:75).

However, the Nisga'a may not have been aware of the effects the missionaries would bring. It can be said that no one could predict what would happen in the future. The Nisga'a wanted to become part of the larger society, and to do this, the Nisga'a made decisions and sacrifices. Only in hindsight would all the consequences of these actions be visible (Deanna Nyce pers. comm. July 19 1996).

Although missionaries endeavored to learn the Nisga'a language during that era, it did not mean that they understood or respected the Nisga'a culture. On the contrary, Tomlinson wrote the following in his letter in 1870:

To overthrow dark superstition and plant instead Christian truth to change the natives from ignorant, bloodthirsty, cruel savages into quiet useful subjects of our Gracious Queen has been the object

held out to those whom the Society sends forth as its agent (cited in Patterson 1982:52-53).

The Nisga'a traditional practices were regarded as pagan. The missionaries "with Christian zeal, persuaded the Nisga'a to chop down the totem poles the missionaries feared as symbols of idolatry" (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993:10). In the 1880s, the potlatch was intentionally suppressed, and the enactment of the *Potlatch Law* (contained in the Indian Act of 1884) reduced its practice. As the potlatch and ceremonial life generally declined, so did totem pole raising. The making of totem poles declined and many in the village were destroyed (Patterson 1982:99). Colonization of the Nass Valley started with the arrival of the missionaries.

Lakalzap initially accepted the Methodist missionaries between 1877 and 1900. Rev. Alfred Green was in Lakalzap between 1877 and 1890, and he established a school during this time. Lakalzap became an Anglican post in 1904 after Dr. W. T. Rush, the last permanent Methodist missionary, left in 1900 (Patterson 1982:93-94).

Although Kincolith, Aiyansh, and later Lakalzap joined the Anglican Church and had missionary-teacher schools, Gitwinksihlkw did not have a settled mission in the early days. Gitwinksihlkw was eager to have its own school. Because the Anglican Church could not send a person who could teach, Gitwinksihlkw applied to the Salvation Army, and since then the village has been a Salvation Army village. Emma Nyce, a matriarch, recalled the time when the Salvation Army came into the village in the early 1930s:

... when the Salvation Army came in ... I guess they ... felt bad about the people here, so they wanted to station here, and they [the villagers] allowed them [the Salvation Army] to do that. So the next following year they wanted to teach (Dec. 4, 1995: Tape No. 19).

The curricula at the missionary schools were mainly English and Christian doctrine.

By the mid 1920s, some Nisga'a students began to be sent to residential schools such as Coqualeetza in Sardis and Alert Bay off northern Vancouver Island. The Church Missionary Society ran these residential schools, while it maintained the missionary schools in the Nisga'a villages. The main curricula at the residential school were reading, writing, arithmetic, and sports. When the student reached age fourteen, half-day practical education was added. Although there were some certified teachers, the majority of the teachers were from the missionary field (McKay and McKay 1987:67).

The missionary schools in the villages started to be transferred to the Department of Indian Affairs during the 1930s, and became so-called DIA Schools or Indian Day Schools. This transfer was completed by the early 1940s. However, as a result of the limited budgets of the federal government, the standard of education at DIA schools was not up to that of the province of British Columbia, and was roughly "ten to fifteen years behind the educational changes in British Columbia" (McKay and McKay 1987:68).

Since segregation based on race was being protested after the Second World War, a Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons appointed in 1946 proposed that young Aboriginals be educated with non-Aboriginal children (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:13). The federal government's goal changed from assimilation through isolation to immediate integration through education in 1949. The Indian Act was amended in 1951, and many Aboriginal children were sent to provincial schools to be educated with non-Aboriginal students in order to be integrated into the dominant society speedily (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:13).

Many Nisga'a students attending provincial schools were placed in private boarding homes. By the mid-1950s there was a sudden growth in the number of Nisga'a students attending high schools, and this caused a lack of available private boarding homes. As a result, "the majority of the students were placed in the Port Alberni Residential School [on Vancouver Island] and the Edmonton Residential School [in a suburban area of Edmonton]" (McKay and McKay 1987:69). At Edmonton Residential School, which was located in the province of Alberta, the Nisga'a students were mixed with Aboriginal groups from the prairies who came from radically different cultures.

Thus education of the Nisga'a drastically changed in less than one century. When schools were first introduced in the Nass Valley by the missionaries, the Nisga'a still had control of their children's education as well as some control of the missionaries (Patterson 1982:124). However, once the federal government took over the schools in the valley, Nisga'a education started to be handled by non-Nisga'a agencies. The situation with little control of education by the Nisga'a lasted to 1975. A brief history of the establishment of the school district in 1975 will be given in Chapter Three.

In Chapter Two, I will examine what colonization through education brought to the Nisga'a and how education can contribute to decolonization of the Nisga'a. Chapter Three will describe the schools in the Nass Valley and their existing issues besides the brief history of the establishment of the school district. In Chapter Four, I will examine the response to the three research questions described above. Chapter Five will discuss issues in curriculum. This chapter will also consider possibilities for fundamental change in Aboriginal education. Chapter Six, the final chapter, will focus on the Nisga'a contribution to education. This chapter will also discuss what I have learned from the Nisga'a.

CHAPTER TWO: EDUCATION AND DECOLONIZATION

As briefly described in Chapter One, the colonization of Aboriginal people in Canada was implemented partly through education. Since Aboriginal children were educated under the colonial education policy at a young age, the negative effects of education on Aboriginal cultures were enormous. However, in spite of such powerful assimilation policies, Aboriginal cultures have survived in Canada.

This chapter will first focus on colonization through education. Subsequently, it will examine how the Nisga'a have started to decolonize themselves through education, and what concrete steps the Nisga'a have to continue this process.

WHAT COLONIZATION BROUGHT TO THE NISGA'A

In the introductory chapter of *Colonialism and Culture*, Nicholas B. Dirks states:

Colonialism not only has had cultural effects that have too often been either ignored or displaced into the inexorable logics of modernization and world capitalism, it was itself a cultural project of control. Colonial knowledge both enabled colonial conquest and was produced by it; in certain important ways, culture was what colonialism was all about (1992:3).

Cultures that are classified as traditional today are actually the result of reconstruction and transformation of colonial encounters. As a result of the encounters, new categories such as "colonizers and colonized, European and Asian, modern and traditional" were created (Dirks 1992:3). Dirks also states that the linkage of culture and colonialism does not minimize the violence of

colonialism, but allows people to realize that cultural intervention and influence were extensions of the brutality of domination (1992:4-5).

Dirks's interpretation of culture and colonialism is not contrary to the Nisga'a experience of colonization. Deanna Nyce believes that colonizers asserted their economic and spiritual authority causing the colonized people to lose their power to make decisions and a good portion of their belief system. (Dec. 11, 1995: Tape No. 17).

Shirley Morven, the District Principal in charge of the Nisga'a Language and Culture Centre, expressed her interpretation of colonization in an interview:

... [colonizers] had a belief that ... they could take ... their whole culture and just put it down on top of what was there [the Nisga'a culture] [T]hey wanted to take their religion and put it down on top of us, and they wanted to take their kinds of houses and put it on top of us [I]t's almost as if they thought that we did not have ... our culture or language or belief. (Dec. 1, 1995: Tape No. 14).

A Nisga'a woman, who did not want to be identified, pointed out the existing systems in the Nass Valley and stated, "Our health is separated, our political system is separated, and our education system is separated. Traditionally all were integrated, and all were a way of life" (Nov. 29, 1995: Tape No. 29).

Colonization and Education

This section will focus on how the colonization was implemented through education in Canada generally, and will examine what colonization brought to the Nisga'a Nation. The first part will provide a brief history of the Aboriginal education policy of the Canadian government. I will then examine the circumstances of the schools that the Nisga'a attended, and discuss the Nisga'a reactions to those schools.

Table 2-1 is a brief chronology of Aboriginal education and changes in the Nass Valley.

1820	First school of 2 children
1825	First school of 10 children
1830	First school of 20 children
1835	First school of 30 children
1840	First school of 40 children
1845	First school of 50 children
1850	First school of 60 children
1855	First school of 70 children
1860	First school of 80 children
1865	First school of 90 children
1870	First school of 100 children
1875	First school of 110 children
1880	First school of 120 children
1885	First school of 130 children
1890	First school of 140 children
1895	First school of 150 children
1900	First school of 160 children
1905	First school of 170 children
1910	First school of 180 children
1915	First school of 190 children
1920	First school of 200 children
1925	First school of 210 children
1930	First school of 220 children
1935	First school of 230 children
1940	First school of 240 children
1945	First school of 250 children
1950	First school of 260 children
1955	First school of 270 children
1960	First school of 280 children
1965	First school of 290 children
1970	First school of 300 children
1975	First school of 310 children
1980	First school of 320 children
1985	First school of 330 children
1990	First school of 340 children
1995	First school of 350 children
2000	First school of 360 children
2005	First school of 370 children
2010	First school of 380 children
2015	First school of 390 children
2020	First school of 400 children

**Table 2-1 Chronology of Aboriginal Education and the
Changes in the Nass Valley**

1876	Creation of the Indian Act
1879	N. F. Davin's evaluation report on Aboriginal policy in the United States is submitted to the government
1884	The Indian Act outlaws Aboriginal cultural practices
1886	Nisga'a chiefs lobby Victoria on the land question
1890	Establishment of the first Nisga'a Land Committee
1910	Government's revision of Aboriginal education policy "to fit the Indian for civilized life in his own environment"
1913	Government's revision of Aboriginal education policy "to fit the Indian for civilized life in his own environment"
1920	The Indian Act obliges the attendance of Aboriginal children in schools
1940s	DIA completely takes over the missionary schools in the Nass Valley
1949	The federal government's Aboriginal education policy changes from isolation to immediate integration
1950s	Three Nisga'a become certified teachers (Bert McKay and Alvin McKay are two of them)
	Master Tuition Agreement is introduced
	DIA decides to use the B.C. school curriculum in DIA schools (but not enough funds)
1951	The Indian Act is amended. The ban on Aboriginal cultural practices is discontinued
1953	Discarded textbooks from Ontario come to Greenville

- 1954 The process of developing awareness of school education is started in Greenville
- 1955 The Nisga'a Land Committee is re-established as the Nisga'a Tribal Council
- 1960s Forced attendance of Aboriginal high school students at residential schools is discontinued

DIA provides a school superintendent for the whole north coastal region
- 1968 The Nisga'a take the land question to court
- 1969 The Trudeau government issues the White Paper
- 1972 National Indian Brotherhood issues "Indian Control of Indian Education"
- 1973 Split decision on now infamous Calder Case
- 1975 School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) is established
- 1976 Negotiations to settle the land question begin between the Nisga'a and the two levels of governments
- 1996 Agreement-In-Principle is signed

(Note: Adopted from Nisga'a Nation Home Page and Berger 1982)

Historical Review of Aboriginal Education in Canada

Colonization was implemented in Canada partly through the educational system with the objective of assimilating Aboriginal people into mainstream culture. Residential schools, and subsequently, public school education as well as other policies had negative effects on the continuation of Aboriginal cultures all across Canada. "After the Europeans established formal institutions of instruction, the nature and function of education changed dramatically ... Formal education imposed European values, beliefs, and roles in order to 'civilize' Indians who were to be provided with the skills necessary to survive in the dominant society" (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1987:3-4).

A change in Aboriginal education was prompted by a report of 1879 evaluating the American policy to assimilate Aboriginal children into the dominant society (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:6). Following the creation of the Indian Act of 1876, the Canadian government sent N. F. Davin to the United States to investigate the use of industrial schools for Aboriginal education. Davin evaluated the industrial school as being the principal feature of "aggressive civilization" (Haig-Brown 1988:30).

At the time of Davin's report, missionaries in Canada had already exerted significant influence on Aboriginal people. This contributed towards making them abandon their cultures. The Oblates found tremendous possibilities of cultural transformation of Aboriginal people in residential schools (Haig-Brown 1988:34-35). The government left Aboriginal education to the missionaries, thereby also saving money (Furniss 1992:12).

Over the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the number of schools and Aboriginal enrollment in schools increased. On the one hand, many Aboriginal students who received basic literacy and skills returned to their reserves to pursue their traditional ways and proceeded to become leaders.

Mainstream society regarded this outcome as a failure of immediate assimilation of Aboriginal people, and perceived the Aboriginal education policy to be too generous (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:7-8).

On the other hand, many others entered the wage labour sector in the late nineteenth century. The Department of Indian Affairs believed that residential schools were advanced schools where "children could be trained in such skills as industrial trades, agricultural, and domestic labour [sic]" (Furniss 1992:12). However, when Aboriginal graduates successfully competed with European workers it caused the Minister of the Interior to state "we are educating these Indians to compete industrially with our own peoples, which seems to me a very undesirable use of public money" (cited in Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:7-8).

In the early twentieth century, the number of European immigrants increased. Aboriginal graduates from residential schools were no longer needed in the labour market. As a result, Aboriginal graduates had few options but to go back to their reserves (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:8; Stevenson 1991:220). The failure of the assimilation policy, the competition of Aboriginal people for jobs, and the change in the labour market caused the dominant society to alter its attitude toward Aboriginal education.

In 1910, the government revised its Aboriginal education policy. The goal of this revised policy was "to fit the Indian for civilized life in his own environment" rather than "to transform an Indian into a white man (Barman 1986:110). The federal government did not want to spend much money on Aboriginal education, so during the 1920s Aboriginal people had no schools at all in many parts of Canada. Some people had only elementary mission schools in which the quality of teaching was extremely poor (Barman, Hebert, and

McCaskill 1986:9). In these schools the academic component was reduced to only a few hours a day (Stevenson 1991:221).

Aboriginal Experience of Residential Schools

With the residential school, Aboriginal children were removed from their families and placed in a foreign environment where they were forbidden to use their mother tongue and maintain their culture. The purpose of the residential school was to assimilate Aboriginal children into the dominant society. The schools isolated Aboriginal children from their families and their cultural environment on the assumption that otherwise the children would be taken back to primitive and savage societies.

Using one's mother tongue was a subject of strict punishment that many Aboriginal people experienced. In an interview, Lorene Plante spoke about her terrible experience in a residential school called St. Michaels in Alert Bay. She recalled:

Another punishment [that we got] when we [did] speak in our language was you got taken into the ... bathroom unit, and ... there was the used bar soap and they washed your mouth of the soap ... and then scraped it ... and you have to promise the supervisors ... not to speak it [the Nisga'a language] any more (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 21).

Innumerable Aboriginal people experienced this kind of punishment and even more cruel forms of reprimand. These punishments caused mental blocks where speaking their mother tongue was concerned as well as other psychological problems (Haig-Brown 1988; Furniss 1992).

Evaluations of the effects of the residential school, however, have been various. On the negative side, many Aboriginal groups point out that Aboriginal language and culture were suppressed. Although many Nisga'a who have attended residential schools are still fluent speakers of their mother tongue,

McKay and McKay state, "Many Indian language groups were forced to integrate in these schools; thus, a real attempt was made by the staff to force the children to learn English" (1987:68).

Aboriginal students were taught the inferiority of their traditional cultures and forced to conform to Euro-Canadian mainstream society. There are also stories from all across Canada of abuse, neglect, sickness, and widespread death by disease in residential schools.

On the other hand, some Aboriginal people point out that they learned how to survive in mainstream society, and were prepared to become future leaders (Brizinski 1993:172). Donald Wilson also points out that most of today's Aboriginal-rights leaders are products of the church-run schools (1986:64). Lorene Plante's statement reiterated Wilson's perception:

I guess this would be the positive side, while being away, in the residential school ... at a young age, they had to learn to survive ... so they grew up making decisions, they had to learn how to make decisions for themselves, for their brothers and sisters who were also in the schools ... So, some of our leaders now today ... are very very strong leaders (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 21).

However, it was not the goal of the residential school to teach Aboriginal children how to survive in mainstream society or to produce Aboriginal-rights leaders. The residential school was not such a democratic institution. Rather, as Lorene Plante indicated, Aboriginal students had to be strong to survive in the unjust institution and to protect their younger brothers and sisters. As cited from Haig-Brown in Chapter One, it was Aboriginal students' wisdom that led them to recognize the injustice and to protest it.

Nisga'a Experience of Residential Schools

According to the interviewees, many Nisga'a children were sent to various residential schools at a very young age after completion of the Indian

Day Schools in the Nisga'a villages, as the Indian Day School in the Nisga'a villages did not include upper elementary classes. During the 1930s, in the Nass Valley, "[t]hose families that were educationally aware persuaded the Indian agent, if they could, to enroll their children in residential schools. By the start of the Second World War, many Nisga'a families were sending children to residential schools as early as grade 1" (McKay and McKay 1987:67).

They stayed in residential schools until they were fifteen or sixteen years old. According to Lorene Plante's memory, children had to go to school until they were fifteen years old (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 21). They were allowed to go home for two months every summer. However, a lot of parents could not afford to bring the children home, and the children had to stay in schools all year round.

The experience of residential schools of the Nisga'a people in different age categories are varied in terms of years of schooling and treatment that the people received in the schools. There was also a cultural protest. This is described by Emma Nyce who is now in her mid-sixties:

... my brother did [schooling in a residential school for] 2 years, he was sent ... and then [in] the second year he is supposed to come and go with me ... and grandmother said, "No, you wouldn't know anything about our culture if you go away, you gonna be a young lady pretty soon, and you wouldn't know nothing ... you don't have to know what ... [non-Aboriginal] people teach you, they can't teach you, we are Indians," she said ... "It's all right, you are all right here," so that's the way [it] goes (Dec. 4, 1995: Tape No. 19).

Since Emma Nyce was in a direct line to become a matriarch when she was young, which means that she is the eldest daughter of the eldest daughter of a matriarch, her grandmother wanted to keep Emma in the village to train her in this role.

Ed McMillan, the vice-principal of the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School (NESS), talked about his family members' education:

... he [Ed's father] remembers that he was taken away as a young student to get into the residential school, and he got taken out of it, because somebody in his family was sick and needed somebody to help, look after the family at home, so he basically went up to grade two or three, he never had much education. And my older sister, she was taken away [from] a residential school, too, because my mom was sick ... so she didn't have much education, either (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 10).

Percy Tait went to Coqualeetza Residential School. Since he had had an experience of the harsh life and strict traditional education in his village when he was a little boy in the early 1930s, the harshness of the residential school did not bother him so much (pers. comm. November 20, 1995).

As the cases of Emma Nyce and Ed McMillan's father show, attendance in residential schools depended on the families' intentions. In those days, Aboriginal people's reactions to compulsory education varied. "Although school attendance was mandatory from 1920, some families successfully resisted. As a consequence, as late as 1951, eight out of every twenty Indians in Canada over age five reported in the federal census that they possessed no formal schooling" (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:10). According to Deanna Nyce, many Nisga'a parents of Emma Nyce's generation refused to send their children to residential schools, because they were informed about incidents of child deaths in the schools (pers. comm. April 2, 1996).

Bert McKay, the chair of the Ayuukhl Nisga'a, attended St. Michaels, although several years before Lorene Plante. His statement about the school was slightly different. He said, "... my language was not prescriptible as were other denominational schools" (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 8). Despite the fact that he spent eight years in the school and continuously went on to higher education, he is a fluent speaker of the Nisga'a language. As Lorene Plante recalled, the way

Aboriginal children were treated depended on the personality of the principal. She mentioned one principal who "didn't do [negative things] like what the other ... principals did prior to his time" (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 21).

The following are other voices of the Nisga'a people who attended residential schools:

It was ok. To me it was very lonesome ... they [her parents] always encouraged our family, us [children] especially, to get education (Laura Welde, the education administrator of the Gitlakdamiks Band Council, Nov. 21, 1995: Tape No. 27);

I know my husband went to Lytton, that's a different residential school, and he said all they did was [to] feed the pigs for half a day and [to] clean up the farm, they only went to class for two hours in the afternoon..[S]chools must be different, we didn't do anything like that in Alert Bay ... we were going to school regularly ... (A language instructor who did not want to be identified Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 28);

I found out when I was talking to a friend of mine ... [who] went back to Edmonton Residential School after it was completed again, they ... reopened it. This friend of mine said [that she] went back, and she told me ... [that] they weren't allowed to speak their own languages. I don't remember that happening when I was there, maybe I was too young and busy trying to know people and where I was ... She told me all forbidden ... went on ... [and] some boys were sexually abused (Rosie Robinson, a Nisga'a language instructor, Nov. 21, 1995: Tape No. 21).

Among the interviewees, there were no statements of forced attendance in the residential schools, even though many Aboriginal people in Canada have claimed to have experienced incidents where, for example, the Royal Canada Mounted Police picked up children and took them to school. Many Nisga'a families, especially those that were educationally aware wanted to send their children to residential schools (McKay and McKay 1987:67).

However, this does not mean that the Nisga'a were eager to conform to the dominant society. Rather, to survive as a nation, they wanted to know the knowledge that the dominant society had. Irene Griffin stated:

[W]e have our elders [who] have been wise enough to always say, "[E]ducation is very important, we have to be able to speak their [mainstream people's] language, we have to be able to know what they are going to do, if you are going to be successful," so it's always been part of our lives (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 5).

Although they thought it was important to know what mainstream society knew, the Nisga'a may not have been aware of what would happen to young people who were being educated in mainstream society. Later, "[a]s these people came back from the residential schools, the elders realized there was something wrong with them They were neither white nor Nisga'a" (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993:5).

Indian Day Schools in the Nass Valley

As mentioned in Chapter One, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) completely took over the missionary schools in the Nass Valley by the early 1940s (Mckay and McKay 1987:68). Although this thesis will not describe in detail the Indian Day Schools in the Nass Valley, the following will give a general idea of the poor conditions of the schools.

Prior to the transfer to the DIA, Emma Nyce attended the Gitwinksihlkw Indian Day School in the 1930s. The village had been very isolated up to 1958 when a gravel road, that has developed into today's Nisga'a Highway, was opened from Terrace to the Nass Valley. Emma Nyce described the school in an interview:

School wasn't that big, it only holds about 14 [students], the people donated together and they buy desk ... little tables, that we sit on. And ... the Salvation Army officers were teaching us but more

likely they teach us to sing ... they teach us to sing and pray, that's what they did ... and ... there was nobody come around here to check ... Once in a great while the Indian Agent would come up (Dec. 4, 1995: Tape No. 19).

Irene Griffin attended the same school but years after the DIA took over the school. She recalled her schooling in Gitwinksihlkw:

... and they were Salvation Army officers, they weren't teachers at all, they were just priests that came in. [T]hey stayed here and school was right there [B]esides being the preacher, he was also the ... disciplinarian. [S]o any thing we did in the village, we would get strapped for it at school (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 5).

Dennis Nyce started his schooling at the same school in 1965. He recalled his schooling in his village:

... our teacher was the very same teacher who was a preacher [E]very morning, it was customary, when you got [to] school there was a picture of the king and the queen of England in the front of our wall at the front of the washroom, every morning we were made to stand up and salute and sing God Save the ... Queen, and sing Oh Canada. [A]nd yet the day before in ... church, in Sunday School, we were taught that you shouldn't praise ... the idols (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 18).

According to him, as a child, what he was taught was very confusing. In his opinion, saluting the Queen's picture and worshipping an idol were the same. Although he raised this question to the teacher, he did not receive any clear answer.

In other villages, there were also a series of problems. At the Gitlakdamiks Indian Day School in Old Aiyansh, "people came up there were not teaching, they were called teachers, [but] a lot of them came up there with some problems. [T]hey had their own problems, like, some of them were alcoholics" (Ray Gonu, an instructor of the Adult Basic Education (ABE) programme, Nov. 1, 1995: Tape No. 4).

The teachers working in the Nass Valley were not necessarily certified teachers. McKay and McKay describe:

Many were beginning teachers, and the bulk were first and second year college students looking for work. All hiring was done through the Vancouver office via the Ottawa office of DIA, mostly by phone or by correspondence. The result was that most teachers could not fit into the Nass communities (1987:68-69).

Shirley Morven also recalled the teachers: "[T]hey [teachers] just simply trapped themselves in our village, and they didn't really go out [to] visit the parents" (Oct. 25, 1995: Tape No. 13 and 14).

Shirley Morven started teaching at the Gitlakdamiks Indian Day School in 1961. Prior to that, the teacher came from outside of the Nass Valley. When they were not able to find a teacher willing to come to the isolated village, the superintendent of the Indian Affairs came to the Nass Valley, and decided to recruit Shirley Morven as a teaching assistant, because she had finished grade twelve in a university entrance programme. When she started teaching, she only had very poor teaching materials and textbooks that were discards from somewhere else. She recalled that the only good thing about the school was that they had heat and light and proper desks (Oct. 25, 1995: Tape No. 13 and 14).

Bert McKay described a similar situation in Greenville. In 1953, he came back to Greenville, which was his home, as one of the first Nisga'a trained teachers. In that year, people in Greenville were waiting for supplies for teaching from Ottawa. Quietly recalling his anger, he said, "They came, [there were] 8 boxes, huge boxes, and in one box all that was in there were discarded textbooks from Ontario, the books were no longer used at least for 20 years" (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 8).

Nisga'a Experience of Provincial Schools

As described in Chapter One, changes to the Aboriginal education policy began after the Second World War when colonialism was protested in many parts of the world. According to Frideres (1988:173), the government's Aboriginal education policy can be divided into two phases. The first phase, from 1867 to 1945, was dominated by a paternalistic ideology, while the second phase, from 1945 to the present, involved a more democratic ideology. However, he states that the second phase simply refers to the open door policy by which Aboriginal people could attend the off-reserve schools (1988:173). "Liberalism is full of strange paradoxes and reveals different faces depending on one's angle of vision" (Parekh 1995:81).

In 1949, the Canadian government's goal for Aboriginal education was altered from isolation to immediate integration. The Indian Act was amended in 1951 to permit the federal government to make financial agreements with provincial and other schools for Aboriginal children's education (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:13). By 1960, the number of Aboriginal students attending residential schools had been drastically reduced, and many were attending provincial schools (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:13; Frideres 1988:174).

As a result of the government's revision of Aboriginal education policy, Nisga'a students started to be placed in boarding homes to be educated in public schools. According to Anne Lindsay, a professor in the Education at UNBC, this change was not necessarily brought about by the forced policy of the government, but some parents chose to send their children to public schools to avoid residential schools (pers. comm. June 20, 1996). Later, since there were not enough private boarding homes, many of the Nisga'a students were placed in

commercial boarding homes where the "boarding situation was particularly bad" (McKay and McKay 1987:70).

At this time, some former residential schools were changed to residences for Aboriginal students who were attending public schools. Ed McMillan went to a public school in Alberta living in the Edmonton Indian Residential School which no longer had the same function as the residential school of the early days. Deanna Nyce also recalled a similar experience. She lived in the Alberni Indian Students' Residence, a former residential school, when she went to a public high school.

Some other interviewees attended public schools staying at boarding homes. They recalled their negative experiences in the public schools. The following are some of the experiences:

We went into a boarding home programme, and I found that school very prejudice, they are very very prejudice with Indians ... they treated us really disrespectful way and mean ... those of all ... racism (Kathleen Clayton, member of the board of the WWN, Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2);

Negative points were probably the racism because, when I went to school, high school in Terrace, and ... in Rupert, and in Vancouver ... I was always called squaw ... like, stinky, it was ... very very negative, especially in elementary (Irene Griffin Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 5);

There was this boy who kept on ... trying to get after us and ... especially me, calling me squaw and all those kinds of names ... (Marilyn Tait, the administrative secretary of the WWN, Nov. 23, 1995: Tape No. 23).

Aboriginal students in provincial schools had to face daily and direct discrimination from teachers and other students, although many of the Aboriginal students might have been exposed to indirect racism on their reserves already. Many non-Aboriginal people had a distorted image of

Aboriginal students. This racism and discrimination may have led to lower marks and a higher drop-out rate for Aboriginal students (Frideres 1988:179).

For the Nisga'a, "[The past education was] very very negative. That's why [the Nisga'a] have ABE [Adult Basic Education] now, that's trying to ... bridge that gap that negative experience caused" (Ray Gonu Nov. 1, 1995: Tape No. 4).

Regarding the distorted image of Aboriginal people, Kathleen Clayton stated, "... being called squaw, stink squaw, go home and live in your teepee, I mean people actually thought we lived in teepees up here" (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2). However, the teepee was not Nisga'a traditional dwelling at all.

Frideres also states that the competition for achievement in public schools was more severe than in the government-run Indian Day Schools. He states, "Native children, not used to the intense competition that exists among White, middle-class students, may become psychologically uncomfortable and begin to lose academic ground ... Not surprisingly, these social disruptions eventually result in a high drop-out rate among Native students" (1988:179).

This situation can be analyzed more structurally. Michael W. Apple states, "The educational institutions are usually the main agencies of transmission of an effective dominant culture" (1990:6). He depicts the mechanism of the school by using the term "cultural capital" (1990:33). Cultural capital is "proficiency in the consumption of and discourse about generally prestigious – that is, institutionally screened and validated – cultural goods and cultural resources" (DiMaggio 1991:134). Apple states that the cultural capital of the middle class is taken as natural and employed by schools as if all the children have had equal access to it. However, when schools accept all the children as equal, in fact, they favor those who already have learned middle class culture (Apple 1990:33).

Legacy of Colonization

As examined in the previous section, Nisga'a experiences of education were problematic throughout numerous generations. In the residential school, some students were not allowed to speak the Nisga'a language, and others did not have the opportunity to speak the language because there was no Nisga'a language spoken around them. No matter what the reasons were, the residential school experience interrupted the transmission of Nisga'a culture. Furthermore, with both the residential school and the provincial school, young students were forced to leave their natural parents. This led to problems for children who received inadequate parenting and lacked skills to raise their own children.

The Nisga'a Perspective on Past Schooling

The Nisga'a perspective on schooling from the time of the residential schools and the public schools, that is to say prior to the inception of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), is generally negative. Although there are still many who preserve the Nisga'a culture, not all the people have retained their cultural heritage well. This section will examine some of the many negative effects of colonization for the Nisga'a.

One example is the mental block Lorene Plante has when she speaks Nisga'a because of her negative experience in residential school. She said, "I could even sit next to ... non-Nisga'a and translate to them, but if I have to translate from English to Nisga'a, it becomes mental block for me ... I have to overcome that mental block" (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 21).

Jacob McKay, the chair of the Board of the School Trustees, said, "[In] all those boarding home programme [and] a lot of residential school, a lot of those grandparents were successfully brainwashed I guess ... to forget ... the art, to

forget their language, to forget who their parents were" (Dec. 12, 1995: Tape No. 9).

Shirley Morven defined the residential school as a place "where there was an interruption of your culture." She continued, "It's a real, rude, rapid, I mean a quick interruption of your ... cultural development" (Oct. 25, 1995: Tape No. 13 and 14).

From the residential school to the provincial school era, the Nisga'a children could not benefit from the valuable counseling that normally would have been provided by their own parents. Bert McKay and Alvin McKay think this lack of parental advice caused the failure of the Nisga'a children in school education. Bert McKay stated, "The other problem that caused the drop-out rate was lack of parental role, they were placed in foreign home, lack of counseling" (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 8).

Alvin McKay stated:

... after grade 7, the student had to leave home, either going to residential schools or later on, 1960s, to the Department of Indian Affairs Boarding Home Programmes, and so the young people were forced to be away from the natural parents for the whole school year. And therefore, they lost out the valuable parental counseling and directions in life (Nov. 10, 1995: Tape No. 7).

The lack of parental counseling caused not only Nisga'a students' failure in the school, but also a lack of parenting skills. According to Lorene Plante, "... a lot of the grandparents now had to learn not only how to be grandparents, but how to be a parent, because a lot of the children were sent away at very young age" (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 21). People unconsciously learn how to be parents through their own experience of being raised by their parents. However, in the residential school, Nisga'a youth were raised in institutions, and during the provincial school era, students were placed in non-Aboriginal boarding homes. As a result, many parenting skills were lost.

For some parents, placing their children in the colonial educational system brought constant struggles. Deanna Nyce was one of them. She mentioned her son's schooling. Her son attended the Indian Day School in New Aiyansh until he was in grade four, when School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) was established. One time, he had to attend a school in Vancouver, because his family moved to Vancouver to take care of his grandfather who was in a hospital. Deanna Nyce, as a mother, recalled:

But it was a battle, it was a constant battle every step along the way ... I had to go and talk to the principal and talk to the teacher constantly saying, "Do not make any assumptions about my child's culture that puts down his ability to learn. [H]e is a very curious individual, very talented individual and I want to foster the curiosity and talent" (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15 and 16).

Irene Griffin also spoke out as a mother:

... and she [the school teacher] made the kids think that they were dumb, because they were born in December and they started school when they were four in September, but they turned five in December. So she would make those kids think they were slow (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 5).

She decided not to let the teacher intimidate her son. She started working as a teacher's aid to be with her son in the school.

As a result of the parents' involvement protecting their children, both Deanna Nyce's son and Irene Griffin's son succeeded in school education. They obtained university degrees and came back to the valley to contribute to the Nisga'a Nation. The other children in these families have achieved similar success.

Internalized Colonization

As Jacob McKay and Shirley Morven stated, many Nisga'a had been "successfully" brainwashed as little children. As a result of the brainwashing,

colonization was internalized into the Nisga'a culture. Internalized colonization "sounds as if the process of colonization is repeated within a culture, in which we are divided into either the colonizer or the colonized" (Yoshioka 1995:106-107). However, in this thesis, internalized colonization refers to, as Yoshioka states, "a deeper structural element in which the colonizer and the colonized are mutually implicated" (1995:107). Internalized colonization has been staying among the Nisga'a as a result of an actual colonization which was carried out through the educational system.

Yoshioka notes, "I know that internalized colonization is an abnormal expression. A colony often means a distant area, so it may sound strange to relate it to something within one's own culture" (1995:106). However, internalized colonization is neither an unusual phenomenon nor is a term that is inapplicable for a people colonized by an external power, like the Nisga'a.

Michael W. Apple states that schools "teach hidden curriculum that seems uniquely suited to maintain the ideological hegemony of the most powerful classes." What is taught through hidden curriculum leads to the internalization. Apple continues to state that the internalization is the basis for ideological and social stability (1990:43). This ideological saturation is, of course, more effective if it is done when a person is very young. This indoctrination is what many Nisga'a people experienced through education in the past.

Shirley Morven stated, "... it made us begin to think that we were crazy ... once we became ... to feel like that, then ... it was easier [for the colonizer] to manipulate us ... and to ... convince us that this is the right way, the only way, the best way." According to her, when she started teaching in the Gitlakdamiks Indian Day School in 1961, she was there simply as another colonizer. She critically talked about her past:

I followed exactly what I had learned when I was a child in a residential school ... I would be strict, very strict, just like the way I was taught to be strict, I had learned how to be really strict, I was aggressive with the children, very aggressive with the children, and I did not reward anybody, because when I was little I must not have seen any reward, I did not recognize an effort or progress, I was simply there as a colonizer (Nov. 25, 1995: Tape No. 13 and 14).

Shirley Morven's experience is clear evidence of what Paulo Freire described: "[A]lmost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors'" (1982:29-30). Shirley Morven saw she had become an oppressor by following what she had been taught in residential schools.

Deanna Nyce also, citing Paulo Freire, stated:

... and they [oppressed people] become bigger and better oppressors than the oppressors were, and I think there is still very clear evidence of that in our community, where some things are running in a very autocratic manner ... it's not everywhere, but there are reflections of it [autocracy] ... there are fragments of this ... our people traditionally are not like that ... we still have long ways to go to get back to our people's original philosophy of sharing, real sharing" (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15 and 16).

Both Shirley Morven and Deanna Nyce pointed out the internalized colonization that exists among the Nisga'a people. Even among the Nisga'a, there were a few people who did not want the Nisga'a language to be taught in the DIA schools in the Nass Valley. However, it has to be emphasized that neither Shirley Morven nor Deanna Nyce criticized any individual for his or her coloniser-like attitude. Instead, they criticized the system which had brought negative impacts on the Nisga'a culture.

The Nisga'a people have not recovered from the effects of internalized colonization. Several interviewees stated that some people did not know the

Nisga'a culture or were not interested in pursuing their tradition. As Paulo Freire stated, "[t]he very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped" (1982:30).

A WAY TO DECOLONIZATION

As depicted in the previous sections, Nisga'a children were sent outside of the Nass Valley when they finished the DIA schools in the Nisga'a villages. Since many of them had been brainwashed in the dominant society, colonization was internalized among the Nisga'a. However, people were suspicious of what was happening in the schools in the valley. If the Nisga'a had been totally colonized, they would not have established their own school district for more control of education. Even if internalized colonization appeared at one point in the Nisga'a history, people's consciousness of internalized colonization led them towards decolonization. The following section focuses on how Nisga'a decolonization started among the people, and how it will continue.

Beginning of Decolonization

The Nisga'a struggle against colonization started as early as the nineteenth century in the form of land questions which are now often referred to as "land claims." More recently, in 1913, the Nisga'a formed the Nisga'a Land Committee to be sent to Ottawa to discuss the questions of the Nisga'a traditional territory. In 1916, other Aboriginal groups on the northwest coast in British Columbia joined the Nisga'a to form the Allied Tribes of British Columbia (Berger 1982:234).

In this larger context of decolonization, there emerged a clear consciousness of decolonization in the education field, and a movement for control of education began in the 1950s. Even though some interviewees stated that many people had been successfully brainwashed, the experience "left a feeling in the hearts of the people that there was something wrong" (Shirley Morven Dec. 1, 1995: Tape No. 14). There were people who began to see that what was happening in the schools was not right and was not the Nisga'a way of teaching children (Shirley Morven Dec. 1, 1995: Tape No. 14).

The first movement towards decolonization through education started in Greenville in 1953 when Bert McKay was angry at the discarded textbooks from Ontario. He called all the leaders of the village together to discuss how they could enrich the school programme in Greenville. They established a Parent-Teacher Association, which involved all the teachers and the parents, to support the school. Bert McKay stated:

... other [people from] Kincolith, came up to this need, people from Canyon City came down to see, people from Aiyansh [too]. And then ... they ... were very inquisitive [about] how can we ... provide [a] better programme for our children, then I told them through control, we have to have control to determine ... [what is] good for our children (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 8).

In Aiyansh, Shirley Morven was struggling to seek decolonization in her daily teaching. She explained how she changed from, being in her words, another colonizer to a teacher who was trying to decolonize herself. She stated:

I was now, exactly like the people who came and colonized me, and ... I never liked it ... and I wasn't the only one, other people did [the same thing]. I began to decolonize [myself], one of the things that I did [in] one year, I decided that I [would] teach the children how to sing in Nisga'a.

Since then her endeavour to achieve decolonization has been vital. She continued:

I had children [who were] do[ing] their own creations. I ... didn't follow the curriculum ... that said "You have to do this theme." I can't do a theme about the city when I'm in a country, my kids have never seen a city, so ... we would do things, we go out and ... look at trees ... and there were beautiful beautiful pictures (Dec. 1, 1995: Tape No. 14).

The next thing that she did was to bring the late Eli Gosnell into her classroom, and asked him to tell Nisga'a stories to the students instead of using Aesop's Fables. The stories that Eli Gosnell told were so dynamic and colorful that the students were mesmerized by them. Next, Shirley Morven brought her students to Eli Gosnell's house to show the students the traditional Nisga'a carvings. Eli Gosnell told nine or ten-year-old children, "If you want to learn how to carve, I'll show you how to make your tools" (Shirley Morven Dec. 1, 1995: Tape No. 14).

This emerging consciousness of the importance of control of education and of the actual change towards decolonization in education in the Nass Valley led the Nisga'a Nation to establish their own school district. The history of the establishment of the school district will be described in Chapter Three.

A Way to Decolonization

Although this thesis regards Nisga'a control of education as an important step towards decolonization, it does not mean that Nisga'a control of education *is* decolonization. Since there is no package of programmes of decolonization which can lead people to holistic decolonization, it is gradually realized through practical strategies in different kinds of fields, such as politics, economy, education, and so forth. What this thesis emphasizes is that obtaining control of education is one of the practical steps for decolonization, as well as self-government and settlement of land questions.

Another indispensable element for decolonization is people's consciousness about colonization. Paulo Freire states:

The pedagogy of the first stage must deal with the problem of the oppressed consciousness and the oppressor consciousness, the problem of men who oppress and men who suffer oppression. It must take into account their behavior, their view of the world, and their ethics (1982:40).

The following statement from Deanna Nyce shows that what Paulo Freire states is true for the Nisga'a as well: "... we were an oppressed people, we are probably still an oppressed people. I think ... we constantly need to reflect and look at that" (Dec. 11, 1995: Tape No. 17).

Paralleling the process of decolonization with that of cleaning a house, Shirley Morven stated that decolonization was a "shaking-off" of colonization. She said, "[W]hen you clean your house ... you put out everything and you begin to put order there, but the house still looks messy ... until you ... have [a] new place or you throw out whatever ... you don't need any more" (Dec. 1, 1995: Tape No. 14). What she said implies that the Nisga'a need a total shaking-off, and that in order for that to be realized, it is necessary for the Nisga'a to reflect about what was brought to them by colonization.

A Nisga'a woman, who did not want to be identified, emphasized the importance of interpreting what colonization brought to the Nisga'a and how colonization was done. She stated:

It's [decolonization] possible, many people have kind a look at what was there and address those issues in their lives and recognize that how they interpret their life ... colonization or assimilation definitely needs to be redressed, but, the harming and hurt that has been caused, I don't think it could be repaid, fixed (Nov. 29, 1995: Tape No. 29).

This process of reflection and interpretation, however, will be full of pain and trauma, especially when people reflect on the meaning of internalized

colonization. Shirley Morven stated that she had caused much damage to the children when she was doing what she had thought right (Dec. 1, 1995: Tape No. 14). She implied the importance of reflecting on not only what colonization had done, but also what internalized colonization had done. When a people are working towards decolonization, it is necessary to reflect on the internalized colonization, and this will be the most painful stage to decolonization. Shirley Morven stated, "I think that ... decolonization is going to be ... painful, but I think ... if we accept the fact that it's going to be traumatic and painful ... we [will] probably [be] ... able to do quite good ... job" (Dec. 1, 1995: Tape No. 14).

These people stress the necessity of constantly being aware of what the Nisga'a had before, and what the Nisga'a lost since colonization started. Shirley Morven stated, "[B]ut there are some of us who still deny that ... we lost quite a little bit and we ... still think we are doing [the] right thing, some of us don't realize that we are ... still colonizers" (Dec. 1, 1995: Tape No. 14).

Although reflection is an important process, Pieterse and Parekh argue that "it is extremely difficult to identify what values, institutions and identities are foreign and part of the colonial legacy" (1995:3). In addition, as Shirley Morven stated, there are a few pieces of the culture that the Nisga'a will never get back. For example, she is glad that the arranged marriage has gone, but she is worried that Nisga'a Nation's unity was lost as a result of colonization. She stated:

... the whole concept of unity, the principle of unity ... for Nisga'a people meant that you accepted whatever contribution anybody could make ... to make you a strong ... nation. [N]ow that whole concept ... of unity is ... not [there], there are part of puzzle missing, too (Dec. 1, 1995: Tape No. 14).

Shirley Morven's sorrow, however, does not mean that she and the Nisga'a want to go back to the pre-contact era. In fact, most of the interviewees

emphasized the importance of surviving in and adapting to the modern world, although they also emphasized that they have to do so without losing Nisga'a cultural values.

Then, there emerges the question of what the principle of decolonization is. If decolonization does not mean that the Nisga'a go back to the pre-contact era, and it definitely does not, what can the principle of decolonization be? Pieterse and Parekh, paralleling the process of colonization and decolonization, give an idea of the route of decolonization:

Colonialism evolved a new consciousness out of a subtle mixture of the old and new; decolonization has to follow the same route. It requires not the restoration of a historically continuous and allegedly pure precolonial heritage, but an imaginative creation of a new form of consciousness and way of life (1955:3).

Although part of the definition of decolonization may be preservation of traditional cultural values, decolonization also must be adaptable to and realistic in this changing world. In other words, decolonization for the Nisga'a seems to be that the Nisga'a integrate the modern or non-Aboriginal systems, such as the school district, with Nisga'a governance and values, and do so on their own terms.

CHAPTER THREE : SCHOOLS IN THE NASS VALLEY

This chapter will now examine how the Nisga'a have used education as a tool for decolonization by focusing on the history of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), and how the Nisga'a see the school district and its existing problems. Then, the chapter will focus on the establishment of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (WWN), its effects on Nisga'a education, and the problems faced by the WWN as a new and Aboriginal-run institution.

HISTORY OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 92 (NISGA'A)

As mentioned in the earlier chapters, until the inception of the school district, there was no secondary school in the Nass Valley. In the 1970s, when the Nisga'a students finished grade seven, they were sent to public secondary schools mostly in the southern part of British Columbia. It was the control by non-Nisga'a agencies that caused the failure of proper development of schools in the Nass Valley and the failure of the Nisga'a students studying outside of the valley. Teachers, curriculum, and textbooks were all brought in to the schools in the Nass Valley from other federal schools. The residential school and the Boarding Home Programme in which Nisga'a students were placed at non-Aboriginal boarding homes, imposed an alien way of life and forced Nisga'a students to integrate into mainstream culture. During those eras, there was no input from the Nisga'a parents (McKay and McKay 1987:71).

Nisga'a parents had a difficult time sending their children outside the Nass Valley. Kathleen Clayton recalled people's feelings from those days, "[T]hat's enough, hard enough" She told how she could not send her children anywhere even for only one day (her children went to high school in the valley).

She stated, "I thought our parents were pretty strong to ... allow that to happen" (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2).

Deanna Nyce's children also went to high school in the Nass Valley. However, if she had to send her children outside of the valley she would not have done so. She stated:

I don't think that I [would] have been able to send my son ... out to go to school ... I just couldn't do that. I would not risk my son. All that time I invested in him and his future ... and he still needed my guidance ... at that time. And he still needs parents' guidance as long as parents live, and after that he relies on the guidance from other people ... I just wouldn't be able to [send my son], I would have to leave myself, which meant even if I had to move away, quit my job and live on welfare, I would have done that, because ... I wouldn't trust the other people, what they were doing (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15 and 16).

However, while the secondary school students were being sent to public schools, community awareness of the need to improve school education was growing, especially since 1953 when the people in Greenville received the box of discarded textbooks from Ontario. This growing awareness of the need for change in education and the hardship of parents led the Nisga'a to demand their own school district. In the mid-1960s, parents and leaders of the Nisga'a Tribal Council (NTC) discussed the education issues, and committees were sent where the Nisga'a students were boarding to inspect the situation of the Boarding Home Programme. The evidence of miseducation was presented to the federal government. The NTC decided to open discussions with the Education Services of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA). The NTC raised nine points regarding education issues, such as the growing drop-out rate, the non-productive results of the grade 1-7 programmes, and the dead-end vocational and technical courses (McKay and McKay 1987:72).

The Nisga'a held several meetings with the DIA between 1968 and 1970. The DIA eventually agreed to provide 1.2 million dollars to build a new high school in New Aiyansh and to open discussions with School District No. 88 (Terrace). Several discussions were held between the Nisga'a and the Terrace school district regarding a possible merger. After a series of negotiations, however, the Nisga'a found no possibility for them to have any control, to set up a Nisga'a-emphasized bicultural and bilingual curriculum, and to locate administration in the Nass Valley. For the Nisga'a, the idea of amalgamation would be no better than the former non-productive miseducation (Mckay and Mckay 1987:72-73).

After the Nisga'a ceased negotiations with the Terrace school district, they approached the British Columbia Ministry of Education. A favorable response from the ministry came as a result of a meeting held in January 1974. At that meeting, the Nisga'a emphasized six points including the importance of bicultural and bilingual education, the need for local autonomy in the administration, and the need for direct community involvement. Later, the six points were narrowed down to the following three demands:

1. a request for the immediate creation of a separate school district in the Nass Valley area;
2. Nisga'a-emphasized bilingual and bicultural curriculum in parallel with the provincial core curriculum;
3. the immediate implementation of building a high school in New Aiyansh (McKay and McKay 1987:72-74).

Kathleen Clayton remembered that a lot of meetings on education had been held in the community. She stated:

I remember all the meetings ... in this community over the school. Our people wanted our own school [T]hey said, 'We want a high school, one elementary school for our own kids here, in this

village' So the education committees and PTAs call[ed] them ... people [went to] ... public meetings all the time. I mean our hall used to be full of people all the time, and people would be discussing issues about education. Our kids [were] still being sent away then ... a lot of my brothers and sisters were all away at school ... I remember the meetings at the hall and listening to the parents talk about [it the] whole day, "We don't want kids to go away any more" [I]t's really emotional (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2).

In July 1974, the three demands were agreed to by the provincial cabinet, and in mid-November 1974, School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) was officially created to be in effect on 1 January 1975. The new school district pursued quality education through building new physical facilities, upgrading instructional materials, and improving achievement and performance. The construction of the new school in New Aiyansh began in September 1975, and the name chosen for the school was the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School (NESS). It was officially opened on 2 November 1976 with the totem pole raising commemorating the unity of the Nisga'a people. This was the first totem pole raised since the poles had been chopped down. Prior to that, Greenville Elementary School (now Lakalzap Elementary School) and Kincolith Elementary School were officially opened in the respective villages. In 1979, Kincolith Elementary School was renamed the Nathan Barton Elementary School after a Nisga'a chief (McKay and McKay 1987:74-75).

At this point, Gitwinksihlkw did not have an elementary school in the village. Students from Gitwinksihlkw attended the NESS. A new school, to be called Gitwinksihlkw Elementary School, was approved by the Ministry of Education in the 1991-1992 school year, but the Nisga'a had to wait for approval from the Finance Department (School District No. 92 1991-1992:1). In the 1992-1993 school year, Gitwinksihlkw Elementary School was postponed, and it was

expected that construction would start in the fall of 1993 (School District No. 92 1992-1993:1). The school finally opened in 1994.

Although the number of enrolled students changes from year to year, the NESS has around 300 enrolled students, Lakalzap Elementary School has 120, Nathan Barton Elementary School has 45, and Gitwinksihlkw Elementary School has 50 (School District No. 92 (Nisga'a)). The 1990 annual report of the school district states that 99 per cent of the students enrolled in the schools are Nisga'a.

The building of the NESS is patterned after the traditional longhouse with cedar finishing. By 1976, five group homes were built behind the NESS mainly for the students from Kincolith who could not commute on a daily basis, but also for students from broken families. In 1976, approximately seventy full-time students resided at group homes (McKay and McKay 1987:75-76). There are six group homes and each group home has nine bedrooms. These homes are supervised by live-in parents from the communities.

However, when I conducted the field study in 1995, one building was used as the Nisga'a Language and Culture Centre, and another one was used as an ABE classroom. According to Deanna Nyce, the reason why two buildings were used for other purposes was the decrease in the number of Kincolith students who attended the NESS after Kincolith established a Local Education Agreement with the Prince Rupert school district. This presumably gave the Kincolith people more control of education and some students started to attend school in Prince Rupert (pers. comm. June 18, 1996). There will be a more detailed description of the Local Education Agreement in Chapter Four.

Besides the improvement of the physical facilities, an effort was made to improve teacher hiring. As described in Chapter Two, the quality of the teachers in the DIA schools was not necessarily satisfactory. After the school district was established, teacher recruitment gradually improved. When the school district

began, "three-quarters of the teachers had three years or less of training." However, "[t]oday, over 95 per cent of the teachers have a degree in education (McKay and McKay 1987:77). In addition to that, by 1980, a number of Nisga'a students were enrolled in teacher education programmes such as the Native Indian Teacher Education Programme (NITEP) of the University of British Columbia. However, the 1990 annual report of the school district confirms that approximately three quarters of the teachers were still non-Aboriginal.

According to McKay and McKay, "In 1975, most of the grade 7-12 students were three or four years behind in reading, English, math and science. There was a dropout rate of 90 per cent in the secondary years" (1987:77). The annual reports issued in recent years depict a change in the graduation rate of the school district. The graduation rate was 29.0 per cent in the 1987-1988 school year, and 55.6 per cent in the 1991-1992 school year. Table 3-1 and 3-2 show respectively the comparison of graduation rates across the school district, province of BC, and Canada, and the comparison of grade-12 students' achievement across the school district and the province in the 1992-1993 school year.

**Table 3-1 Comparison of the Graduation Rates Across the
School District, Province of BC, and Canada**

School Year	District # 92 %	Province %	Canada %
1987/88	29.90	70.60	66.00
1988/89	30.80	70.80	66.40
1989/90	40.00	70.10	68.50
1990/91	45.50	71.30	70.40
1991/92	55.60	87.80	73.20
1992/93	39.10	84.40	74.60

(Sources: 1987-91 District and Province – School District Annual Report 1991-1992; 1991-93 District and Province – School District Annual Report 1992-1993; 1987/88 Canada – Education in Canada: A Statistical Review for 1989-90; 1988-93 Canada – Education in Canada 1995)

The graduation rates in the school district were calculated "by dividing the number of grade 12 students who actually graduated by the number who were registered in grade 12 in September ... however, [there are] several adult students who registered in grade 12 every year but cannot fulfill the graduation requirements" (School District No. 92 1991-1992:3). This indicates that the actual graduation rates of school-age students are somewhat higher than the numbers demonstrated above. Although the annual reports conclude that the graduation rate in School District No. 92 is still low compared to the Provincial graduation rate, it has constantly increased except the 1992-1993 school year. This increasing graduation rate obviously depicts one aspect of the success brought by the school district.

Table 3-2 Comparison of grade-12 students' Achievement Across the School District and the Province of BC in the 1992-1993 School Year

English 12	# enrolled	Dist. Mean	Prov. Mean	A	B	C+	C	P	F
School Marks	11	58	69	-	1	1	2	7	-
Prov. Exam Marks	10	51	70	-	1	-	-	4	5
Combined Marks	10	54	70	-	1	-	-	9	-
Communications 12	# enrolled	Dist. Mean	Prov. Mean	A	B	C+	C	P	F
School Marks	8	60	61	-	-	3	2	3	-
Prov. Exam Marks	8	57	63	-	1	1	1	3	2
Combined Marks	8	59	62	-	1	-	2	5	-
Biology	# enrolled	Dist. Mean	Prov. Mean	A	B	C+	C	P	F
School Marks	7	52	70	-	1	-	-	5	1
Prov. Exam Marks	6	38	67	-	-	-	-	-	6
Combined Marks	6	49	70	-	-	-	1	1	4
Mathematics 12	# enrolled	Dist. Mean	Prov. Mean	A	B	C+	C	P	F
School Marks	4	68	70	-	1	1	2	-	-
Prov. Exam Marks	5	25	63	-	-	-	-	-	5
Combined Marks	4	52	68	-	-	-	-	4	-

(Source: School District 92 Nisga'a Annual Report 1992-1993
Notes: Dist. Mean – District Average; Prov. Mean – Province Average; P – Pass; F – Failure. Communication 12 was the highest grade in the province in that year)

Although there are requiring improvement in the school district, they have been ceaselessly discussed in the community with the aim of improving the quality of education. "During the school year, in each village, either the Parent Teacher Association or the Education Committee hold regular meetings with the school staff, discussing all facets of education" (School District No. 92 1990:8). Three-day annual education conventions, co-sponsored by the school district and the Nisga'a Tribal Council, have been held at the beginning of every school year since 1978. They involve parents, teachers, administrators, other community members, and student representatives (McKay and McKay 1987:81; School District No. 92 1990:8).

Every year, the education convention has a theme. In the past few years, the themes were the following:

Parents, Teachers and Children of Today and Tomorrow (1990-1991);

Effective Life Skills Lead to Education Success (1991-1992);

Elders Teaching, Parents Listening, Children Learning (1992-1993);

School District No. 92's Strength Is in Its Nisga'a Uniqueness (1993-1994); and

We Are Setting a Firm Path for Our Education (1995-1996).

At the 1995-1996 annual convention which I attended, Alvin McKay, as a topic speaker, pointed out that young people were not learning things in a way in which they should learn, and that many negative things were happening. He also commented that young people's minds seemed to be empty, and that they did not understand the meaning of life. He emphasized that if young people lacked strong, positive, and directed home training, it would be difficult for them to be successful in school education.

The main topic of the discussion was "Responsibilities of Parents Regarding Children's Learning." There were the following five sub-topics:

(a) How adults can encourage, guide/direct learning efforts;

- (b) How to avoid laziness; procrastination; too much play etc.;
- (c) Values of life (honesty; fairness; sharing; consideration etc.);
- (d) Child preparation re listening/seeing; classwork & homework; behaviour;
- (e) Child helps- sleep/rest; eat; play vs. chores; T.V. vs. routines of life.

These five sub-topics were discussed for two days out of three. In every discussion, parents, grandparents, and teachers actively discussed several issues about children's well-being.

Recently, changes have been made in formal parents' group in the Nass Valley. A new principal of the NESS, Art Tindill, in conjunction with Ben Haizimsque and other parents, revitalized the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) to the NESS. Art Tindill explained PAC, saying :

Parent-Teacher Association [PTA] is an association which no longer exists in Canada ... The national body across Canada representing parent groups now is called the Home-School Federation. But the government of British Columbia, in changing the School Act, identified that parents must be involved in each school, and they call the groups that would be involved in the schools Parent Advisory Councils [PAC], that's the name in the School Act (Oct. 24, 1995 Tape No. 25).

Ben Haizimsque, the current president of the NESS PAC, explained that the PAC was formally recognized by the school board, and that the PAC had access to much more information which the community members had not had before. He stated, "PAC is ... sort of the mechanism for parents to reach to the school board and the school, and we are sort of one way that they can go through and reach the school and participate more in the school at the community level" (Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 6).

Each school in the four Nass Valley communities has its own PAC. When my field research was being done, the NESS PAC had just been reestablished, and the executive members were working on its constitution. Therefore, changes that the PAC would bring to the parents' involvement were not yet visible.

Nisga'a Voices About the School District

Although there are many issues that have to be discussed and resolved by the people, Nisga'a evaluations of the school district are generally very positive. Especially, for the people who were sent away to residential schools and public high schools, and who also had to place their children in the same situation, having their own schools in the Nass Valley was their earnest wish. For the young people who have the experience of learning at schools outside the valley, going to school in their home community is invaluable. The following sections present the voices of Nisga'a people talking about the schools. The question was "What do you think of having your own school in your own community?"

Lorene Plante expressed her appreciation of the language teaching. She said, "I think it's good ... for one thing ... that I didn't see in my time, the learning of our language ... [I]t seems like the roles, kind of, reverse right now, because it's starting from K to 12, the ... children are ... knowing our language now" (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 21).

Shirley Morven recalled her experience of working with the Department of Indian Affairs from 1971 to 1973. One of her responsibilities was to arrange transportation for the students studying outside the Nass Valley to come home and go to school. She recalled:

I remember seeing thirteen-year-old [students] coming off the plane in the middle of a storm ... at 10 or 11 o'clock at night ... to come over the Christmas holidays, and having spent ... about three or four hours waiting at the airport, because the flight couldn't take off, seeing the pale little faces when they got off the plane, and seeing some of the older ones just ... so depressed, because they were so far away from home. And ... then thinking of ... my generation and my parents' generation ... they couldn't even come home, because they were in the residential schools. So, yes! I like the idea, education right in the valley. I like to see all the kids walking to the school in the morning, and ... knowing that they gonna ... going home ... for a lunch yet! (Oct. 25, 1995: Tape No. 13).

Ed McMillan stated, "[W]e learn our culture and our language by speaking with the parents, grandparents, and aunts and uncles, and elders ... so I think that's [a] very big advantage having the schools in the valley" (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 10).

The following are several other people's voices:

I think ... the people seem [to be] pretty happy with it [the school] and ... especially the secondary students. [T]hey don't have to go away ... [to] be placed in homes in cities to continue their education from grade 8 (Rosie Robinson Nov. 21, 1995: Tape No. 21);

I think it's a great idea. I know that the kids now don't know how lucky they are ... I was 12 years old when I got sent away. I was just ... devastated. I didn't want to be away from family. [I] was kind of excited at first, but when I got down there ... I wanted to go right back home (Marilyn Tait Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 23);

I think it's wonderful ... [W]e were just saying this morning ... because it's so cold with the wind blowing, and when I walked to work I was told ... "Isn't it wonderful those little kids [from Gitwinksihlkw] don't have to walk across the bridge any more?" (Irene Griffin Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 5).

I think it's wonderful. I think it's great. We just had our new school here [in Gitwinksihlkw] ... and it's made a real difference both in the lives of students and also lives of the parents and grandparents ... it's had a positive effect in the community relationships that happened (Harry Nyce Jr. Nov. 27, 1995: Tape No. 20).

It's great! It's just great [I]t has its pros and cons of having the school in your community [W]e got a small school district. Funding levels, priorities stuff [like] that within the provincial scheme ... are ... little on the lower end ... but it is a unique school district ... [Y]ou are here getting formal education and then other things [are] going on, funerals, weddings, stone movings, pole raisings, education as Nisga'a (Ben Haizimsque Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 6).

[I]t's just so ... great ... I keep ... tell[ing] people how good it is ... I went to school for one year in Vancouver ... they don't pay enough attention ... so, you don't ... feel like you really know them, but up

here ... everybody is all together, most of them are Nisga'a, even white kids go to school here, they don't feel left out (Charity Gonu, a student of the WWN, Nov. 9, 1995: Tape No. 3).

Jonathan Morven is a grade-7 student who has lived in Prince Rupert for one year. He said that he liked the school in the Nass Valley more than the one in Prince Rupert. He said, "This is where I live, and ... my uncles and aunties, and see my granny is all nice" (Nov. 21, 1995: Tape No. 12).

Robin Casey, who is a grade-10 student, was raised in Williams Lake until he was in grade 8. Comparing the school in Williams Lake and the NESS, he said, "[T]his school, there is not ... many ... kids. Williams Lake, it was terrible, because that school had ... too many students, and they couldn't care [for] individuals. [H]ere they can, they get to know students' study" (Nov. 22, 1995: Tape No. 1).

Thus, people in various age ranges with various perspectives demonstrate the positive effects of the school district. As Robin Casey described, there is the intimate relationship between the teacher and the student. Young children can meet all the time their grandparents and other relatives who are educators for them. Teenage students do not have to lose the valuable counseling of their parents and relatives during this very important stage of their lives.

Because the Nisga'a live in a strongly family-oriented and community-oriented culture, it is necessary that the child live in the family and the community in order for the Nisga'a culture to be passed on to the next generation. Considering the nature of the Nisga'a culture, the value of the fact that the Nisga'a established their own schools in their cultural ground is immeasurable.

Issues in Elementary and Secondary Education

School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) already has a twenty-year history. During the years, there must have been many issues that have been discussed at various regular meetings. Although all of the interviewees emphasized the positive effects of the school district, some interviewees also mentioned problems as did the annual reports of the school district. The following section describes several different kinds of current social and educational issues in the Nass Valley.

The 1990 annual report of School District No. 92 indicates that there are alcohol and drug problems in the valley. The following is one of the thirteen suggestions given by the school district in the annual report:

The District would like to advise prospective parents that alcohol/drug consumption during pregnancy causes impairments such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

The 1991-1992 annual report has nine resolutions submitted to the annual convention committee to be addressed in the 1991-1992 school year. One of them was the establishment of the Drug and Alcohol Preventative Programme.

Charity Gonu described this problem:

There is a lot of alcohol drinks ... I've seen ... when I was in high school ... Now, I know that it's still the same, it could be getting worse for some kids ... I guess they keep passing down [the bad influence], because the kids in my class must [have] see[n] that somewhere ... I don't know how good the Drug and Alcohol Programme is ... I think she [drug and alcohol counselor] should be in the school (Nov. 9, 1995: Tape No. 3).

Her concern, as a mother, is to try to keep her little children from those problems.

A grade-12 student, whose mother did not want him to be identified, also mentioned the drug abuse among students. He stated:

There are a lot of those ... type of students ... [their] parents can't really be their model all the time. [T]hey [parents] are not there,

they are there in the morning to push them [the students] off to school, but they [parents] are not there for them [the students] when they [the students] come home after school [There] are children who feel, kind of, unwanted because of their own negative attitude, some ... students I know were adopted by other Nisga'a parents, and when they found out they were adopted, they become really bad (Nov. 23, 1995: Tape No. 28).

The drug problem is not special in the Nass Valley, but throughout North America. However, this issue seems to be one of the reasons why Alvin McKay said that young people's minds were empty and that they did not understand the meaning of life. This problem affects both the Nisga'a traditional education and the school education. As Charity Gonu indicated, drug counseling tends to resolve the problem superficially. The most important thing is not simply to prevent people from using drugs, but to remove the profound causes which lead people to the drug use.

Although he recognized the positive effects of having their own schools, Ed McMillan admitted some negative aspects as well. He stated:

[H]ere, you are lucky, you've been in a fish bowl, you see everything and you know everything. And sometimes that can be an advantage, and sometimes that can be a disadvantage ... It's a disadvantage when people here ... criticize somebody in the school Some teacher, maybe administrator, or some staff, or janitor or whatever, or teaching assistant [I]t was far ten years ago, we used to get a lot of that [criticism] [W]hen they had education conventions, they used to do what is called teacher bashing (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 10).

Tom Ueda, the assistant superintendent of the school district, explained a tendency that societies have. He stated, "[T]here are some of the family issues ... those same issues spread over into the school, the parents then would expect the school will do everything, will have the magic answers ... so if the children, for example, have a problem of learning, then it's the school's fault, if the children have behaviour problem, it's the school's fault" (Oct. 26, 1995: Tape No. 26).

Ed McMillan, however, commented that the former criticisms against the school or the teacher are rarely heard today. When there is criticism, people who hold the education conventions channel the issue to an appropriate person.

Sharlene Morven (a kindergarten teacher of the NESS) is concerned about the parents' tendency to slight kindergarten education. She stated:

I find they [parents] ... think that since it's kindergarten, [there's] not much they [are going to] miss, but they do miss out a lot ... [When] parents are going out [to Terrace for the day], they go ... maybe visiting [relatives] a lot ... in our culture ... [there are] a lot of ... Nisga'a families keep up the children up with them [adults] ... I think they [children] are using time to spend with them [adults]. So, a lot of them aren't getting to bed early (Dec. 12, 1995: Tape No. 12).

Similarly, when I observed a language class in Greenville on a Friday, the language instructor told me that because many students were absent on Fridays, he could not teach new terms on Fridays, and that generally, those absent students went to visit their relatives in another area or went to Terrace to shop.

The 1990 annual report of the school district informed parents that "late night Bingos result in many exhausted students who stay up late and often miss positive parental support in the morning." The school district discourages week-day Bingos as well. The school district encourages people to support their children's schooling.

However, sometimes there are conflicts between the Nisga'a traditional activities and the Western school system which operates on a different timeline from that of the Nisga'a tradition. Most of the feasts were held on Saturdays during my field research. Generally, stone moving feasts for elderly people last for hours. In most of the cases that I attended, the feasts started around six o'clock in the evening and lasted until two or three o'clock the next morning. Since they were held on Saturdays, people working in the office and the school, and school children were not affected by the feasts. One time, a funeral feast was

held on a Monday that was a holiday, but the next Tuesday was a school day. Most of the parents with young children left the feast earlier. However, some school teachers and several little children stayed until after midnight. They, especially the children, must have had a hard time rising the next morning. While attending the feast is important for the Nisga'a, it may cause the absence of some school students. This fundamental issue has to be carefully discussed.

Besides the problems outside of the school, issues in the curriculum were raised by several people. Ben Haizimsque graduated from the NESS in 1984. Comparing today's education at the NESS with that of his time, he stated, "[A]t that time, the level of education that I received ... was good, it was making up, then ... I'm not sure when it started, but over the years, things were slipped so much, and have become so routine ... the curriculum is at a standstill ... it's been a common concern amongst communities" (Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 6). Some other interviewees expressed the same feeling in the interviews.

Sally-Anne Nyce pointed out the problems of taking some courses. She stated, "If they [students] really wanted French instead of Nisga'a, or biology, chemistry, physics, those type of courses ... it depends on the number of students that want to take it. So if there is not enough students to take ... they don't teach it" (Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 20). She said that she did not know the current situation, but she had heard some parents complain about courses that had not been offered. Sally-Anne Nyce also stated that if some students really wished to take certain courses that were not offered in the school, they would move to Terrace (Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 20).

Marilyn Tait mentioned the lack of enough available extra curricula activities. She stated:

I know that the students suffer because there is ... not much extra curricular activities to be involved in, like School District says that there is no funding for this, there is no funding for that, and

teachers ... don't really want to get involved, because it means ... giving their extra free time to students, while the students said [they] need[ed] it, they need that extra activities to keep them occupied, otherwise they ... go to the streets and then they end up with alcohol or drugs or whatever (Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 23).

This situation, however, is changing after young Nisga'a who have graduated from universities return to the valley to teach. These people coached volleyball teams and basketball teams not only at the school, but in the communities as well. The interviewees' expectation of those who returned to the valley with post-secondary education is quite strong. They think that the successful young people can motivate the younger generation to get higher education, skills, and knowledge which will allow the Nisga'a Nation to survive in the modern world. The returning young people are conscious of their contribution as role models. The need for Nisga'a role models is one of the main reasons why people think having Nisga'a educators in the school is so important.

Another issue to mention is that there are indications of a profound conflict between the Nisga'a tradition and the Western style of education system. School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) has brought many positive effects to the Nisga'a Nation, most notably secondary school students do not have to leave the valley, and hence do not have to lose the valuable counseling of their parents and relatives in this important stage of their lives. Nisga'a students can learn their language and culture at home as well as at school. However, as a provincial school district, School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) is part of a Western framework that is radically different from Nisga'a traditions of teaching. As well, as Deanna Nyce explained, the teachers' training is inadequate for preparing teachers to integrate culture into classroom practices. This thesis will further discuss this issue in Chapter Five.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION

The Nisga'a established a post-secondary institution called the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (Nisga'a House of Wisdom, the WWN) in New Aiyansh in 1993. After the Nisga'a established School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) within the Nass Valley, the next goal was to have a post-secondary institution "that Nisga'a adults have equitable access to high quality learning in the communities where they live and work" (UNBC and the WWN 1993:1). The following section describes a brief history of the establishment of the WWN. The description is mainly based on the interviews with John A. Mackenzie, the chair person of the WWN, (Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 6) and Deanna Nyce, the Chief Executive Officer of the WWN (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 16).

The WWN originally started as an educational service programme that provided post-secondary courses to Nisga'a adults. In 1977, the Nisga'a petitioned the Northwest College Council to provide community educational services for School District No. 92. The council admitted the petition on a cost-sharing basis with the school district, and provided a college coordinator and facilities in the Nass Valley. A number of courses were offered through Northwest Community College (NWCC): upgrading courses (grade 8-12) for adults, first and second year college courses, and introductory vocational courses. Many of them were offered on a nighttime basis (McKay and McKay 1987:77).

In the early 1980s, the Native Indian Teacher Education Programme (NITEP) of the University of British Columbia (UBC) was introduced to the Nass Valley for the Nisga'a language teachers to study education courses. A language instructor who did not want to be identified stated:

[W]hen we first started language [teaching], there was [a] professor ... from UBC and we were taking [courses] under NITEP, we were taking courses here, in [New] Aiyansh ... We went to one summer session. And we were taking stuff like English ... and ... language arts, math ... we took linguistics and ... classroom management (Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 28).

Rosie Robinson also took the NITEP courses in New Aiyansh. She stated:

I took ... English 101 and English 102, and there were other courses ... we were taking these courses at night time, we worked during the day and [took] courses in the evening, and we had instructors coming in from ... Northwest Community College ... and after a while there were some university courses ... we were asked to take these courses, even spent 6 weeks down at UBC. I don't remember which course that was, but we had to go away for it. I think one of them was ... curriculum ... developing (Nov. 21, 1995: Tape No. 21).

"These community education services are important because they improve the level of education attained by adults, helping them to be educationally aware and involved" (McKay and McKay 1987:77). However, these courses were sporadic and not part of long-term plans.

In 1988, the Nisga'a Tribal Council completed the survey "Nisga'a Population and Training Needs Study" to create more meaningful and stable post-secondary educational services. An important recommendation of the survey was to establish a post-secondary institution to meet the needs of Nisga'a adults, and to implement college and university level programmes. One of the very important purposes of this was to prepare people to assume more control after the land question's settlement and thereafter. The Industry Adjustment Committee, a committee of the Tribal Council, established the WWN "to prioritize immediate educational objectives, develop educational plans, identify sources of funding, develop partnerships with other educational institutions, and develop appropriate curriculum materials" (WWN 1995:1).

The Industry Adjustment Committee, empowered by the Tribal Council, started negotiation with other post-secondary institutions, such as UBC, Simon Fraser University, and other universities and colleges to develop the possibility of an articulation of degree programmes. In 1991, after consultation with Nisga'a villages and institutions, the committee was "asked to prepare a proposal for governance and incorporation" (WWN 1995:1).

At that time, the federal government gave the Nisga'a a few grants, and later, the provincial government funded the Nisga'a through Northwest Community College to hire a coordinator. After hiring the coordinator, the education services increased and were more solidified.

In 1992, elected representatives from the Tribal Council, the four Nisga'a villages, School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), and Nass Valley Health Board authorized the establishment of a Nisga'a post-secondary institution under the Society Act. The WWN was incorporated under the Society Act in December 1993 (WWN 1995:1).

Prior to that, in the late 1980s, the conception of the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) included an important mandate to contribute to the interests and needs of people in northern British Columbia, and particularly to serve Aboriginal people in the area. Also, one of UNBC's proposals was decentralized studies.

The Nisga'a, like other Aboriginal groups, approached UNBC. They believed that they were ready to have degree programmes in Nisga'a Studies based on their educational values, because there was a very rich culture in the Nass Valley, and there were a number of qualified people who could realize meaningful programmes by working along with UNBC. After a series of negotiations, the Nisga'a and UNBC established a relationship, and reached a

protocol agreement in 1993. UNBC agreed to offer the Bachelor of Arts degree in First Nations Studies with a Nisga'a emphasis. The Protocol Agreement states:

UNBC and WWN will work together to offer undergraduate programs in the following disciplines beginning in the fall of 1994:

- * Nisga'a Studies and Linguistics (as Nisga'a implementations of courses in First Nations Studies)
- * Anthropology and Archaeology
- * First Nations History (UNBC and WWN 1993:2).

The established relationship between UNBC and the WWN, however, is not the one where UNBC unilaterally backs up the WWN. Rather, it is a mutual contribution. The Protocol Agreement states, "UNBC will work to establish and maintain the autonomy and credibility of WWN as a post-secondary educational institution mandated to serve the Nisga'a Nation. WWN will work to support UNBC in developing a sensitive and effective relationship with aboriginal people and First Nations around the world (UNBC and WWN 1993:1).

During these years, the Nisga'a Tribal Council appointed a five-year interim governing board of the WWN. In order for the WWN to be institutionalized, the Nisga'a Economic Enterprises Inc., which also had a mandate in education, granted a hundred thousand dollars to the WWN, by which the WWN hired the Chief Executive Officer, an Administrative Secretary-Book Keeper, and retained the Education Training Coordinator. On the other hand, UNBC decided to commit three hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars per year. Initially, the amount was bigger than this, but as a result of a federal cutback, the committed amount was reduced.

This amount was always insufficient. In the first year, the Nisga'a contributed large funds for their own post-secondary institution, and also sought further contribution from other sources. However, as the WWN continues to grow, it is clear that funds will continue to fall short of the demands. The WWN also obtains funds from the federal government's Indian Studies Support

Programme and the provincial government through NWCC and a much lesser extent to the Skeena Aboriginal Management Board to support the Nisga'a language and culture courses. The provincial Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, through the Nisga'a Economic Enterprises Inc., renovated an old church owned by the New Aiyansh community into two classrooms for the use of the WWN.

The Nisga'a Tribal Council appointed the chair person of the WWN, John A. Mackenzie. By the WWN Constitution, the board of the WWN consists of elected representatives from different agencies in the Nass Valley, such as Band Councils, School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), Nisga'a Valley Health Board, and the Nisga'a Economic Enterprises Inc. In addition to the board members, Bert McKay was appointed as an acting advisor representing the Nisga'a Tribal Council's Ayuukhl Nisga'a Committee.

The WWN is incorporated under the Societies Act, and has been recognized by Revenue Canada as a charitable institution for tax purposes. It also has been recognized by the BC College of Teachers as the Official Nisga'a Language Authority (UNBC and WWN 1993:5). Although the WWN became a post-secondary institution which provides university degree programmes, it also has a continuous mandate to deliver technical, vocational, and continuing community education, and the Adult Basic Education programmes through affiliation agreements with the Northwest Community College and the Open Learning Agency.

The Protocol Agreement between UNBC and the WWN shows that the WWN is given autonomy and credibility. "WWN will be the final authority on all Nisga'a curriculum and research and must approve all Nisga'a curriculum and research undertaken by UNBC faculty or students" (UNBC and WWN 1993:1). The administration of the Nass Valley-based programmes is handled by

the WWN. The WWN has a Curriculum Committee to work with the First Nations Studies programme chair of UNBC in order to develop curriculum. The WWN expects to set up master's and doctoral programmes in the future. It also expects to have its own campus and to be able to provide students from outside of the area with a school residence.

At the time of my field study, there were seven First Nations Studies courses and one computer science course under the Bachelor of Arts programme in New Aiyansh. Some instructors taught not only in New Aiyansh, but also in other places. Table 3-2 shows the courses offered, instructors, and the number of students enrolled in the fall semester of 1995.

Table 3-3 Wilp Wilxo’oskwhl Nisga’a/ University of Northern British Columbia Offered Courses, Fall Semester, 1995

NEW AIYANSH		
Course	Instructor	# of Students
CPSC 150-3 Computer Applications	Kim Hansen	14
FNST 139 Level 1 Nisga'a Language	Rosie Robinson	23
FNST 169 Level 1 Nisga'a Culture	Ed McMillan	14
FNST 200-3 Methods & Perspectives in First Nations Studies	Maurice Squires	14
FNST 239 Level 3 Nisga'a Language	Verna Williams	9
FNST 269 Level 3 Nisga'a Culture	Dr. Bert McKay	9
FNST 220-3 Introduction to Linguistics	Dr. Marie-Lucie Tarpent	9
FNST 302-3 First Nations Health & Healing	Dr. Mary-Ellen Kelm	13
GREENVILLE		
Course	Instructor	# of Students
FNST 139 Level 1 Nisga'a Language	Verna Williams	15
FNST 169 Level 1 Nisga'a Culture	Alvin McKay	7
TERRACE		
Course	Instructor	# of Students
FNST 139 Level 1 Nisga'a Language	Verna Williams	18
FNST 169 Level 1 Nisga'a Culture	Ray Gonu	6
KINCOLITH		
Course	Instructor	# of Students
FNST 139 Level 1 Nisga'a Language	Peggy Venn	18
PRINCE RUPERT		
Course	Instructor	# of Students
FNST 139 level 1 Nisga'a Language	Audrey McKay	20
FNST 169 Level 1 Nisga'a Culture	Dr. Bert McKay	15
FNST 239 Level 3 Nisga'a Language	Audrey McKay	11
FNST 269 Level 3 Nisga'a Culture	Dr. Bert McKay	8
VANCOUVER		
Course	Instructor	# of Students
FNST 139 Level 1 Nisga'a Language	Allison Nyce	13
FNST 169 Level 1 Nisga'a Culture	Allison Nyce	19
FNST 239 Level 3 Nisga'a Language	Allison Nyce	10

(Source: Wilp Wilxo’oskwhl Nisga’a Report to 16th Annual Education Convention Delegates)

People's Views of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a

When I started my field study in October 1995, the WWN had just started its second year of degree programmes. Although the WWN is still a young institution, people's views towards it are very positive. There are mainly two reasons for the positive views. One is that since it is very difficult for adults who have a family, especially young children, to go to college or university outside of the Nass Valley, having the WWN has brought immeasurable opportunities to them. The other reason is that the older generations that did not have an opportunity to read and write the Nisga'a language now can learn it at the WWN.

Charity Gonu described the positive aspect of not having to leave the community:

It's much easier for me to go to school here, because I have two ... young children, and the older one is in the kindergarten right now ... and [I do] not worry about them I did try to go to the school in Terrace, and that seems [to be] close, but it's not close enough for me I was worried about what was going on here all the time rather than concentrating on my work, so it didn't work out [There are] lots of older people ... that graduated [from the NESS] before me ... they are not doing anything, they could be coming here ... nobody is gonna laugh at anybody for coming to school (Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 23).

She stated that she wanted to send this message to the high school students in the NESS.

Lorene Plante also indicated the positive effect of the WWN for the people who originally had had a dream to continue to study, but had decided to have a family first. She also mentioned a positive influence for the people who had not been able to learn the Nisga'a language in residential schools. She stated:

[N]ow ... with our own college university here in the Nass ... they are going back into the classrooms, learning how to read and write it now. They have to start right from ... the beginning ... , and

which I think is positive although it's shame that had happened (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 21).

Though she admitted the positive effects, Lorene Plante added that there were many people of the residential school generation who were still embittered. The language instructor, who did not want to be identified, also implied that there were people who were still afraid of taking the language courses because of their mental blocks caused by negative experiences in the past (Nov. 15, 1995: Tape 28).

Kathleen Clayton mentioned that kind of fear: "A lot of people of my age have a lot of negative [experience] ... and so it was kind of scary to go back [to school]. Once I got back in there [the WWN], I just enjoyed it" (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2). At the education convention, she emphasized that it was necessary for the Nisga'a to prepare for the governance after the land questions' settlement. She encouraged people to take advantage of having the WWN within the valley.

Young parents started to learn the Nisga'a language at the WWN, and it is expected that those young parents will help and encourage their children to learn the language and culture. Also, what is currently happening is that parents and children help each other to do homework, and sometimes children teach their parents the Nisga'a language. People's expectations that this trend will continue are quite high.

Issues of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a

Like many other new institutions, the WWN has both practical and abstract problems. Not only as a new institution, but also as an Aboriginal-run institution, the WWN has its unique issues. This section will focus on the WWN issues.

One of the practical problems is that there are only two classrooms in the building in New Aiyansh. There is no WWN library yet. Sally-Anne Nyce commented:

We need a library desperately. We need somewhere in the valley where all of the information can be in one area, so that students ... don't have to knock on doors for research, they can go to one place [and] just look for everything. I know there was big frustration last year, students didn't know where to go to ask, and sometimes NTC would not let them go into their offices, sometimes the cultural component at the school would make them go in there, so people get frustrated (Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 20).

She, however, stated that there was no concrete plan for a library yet. She also pointed out that some students had been frustrated because their textbooks had not arrived on time, although this problem is not unique to the WWN. Rather it is a common problem at new institutions or when new courses are being run.

A major practical problem pointed out by John Mackenzie was a tremendous shortfall of funding. He stated, "I mean we still don't have money to do what we hope to do. So you get caught up in ... struggling with that kind of survival issue" (Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 6). According to his estimate, there are about 200 Nisga'a students attending post-secondary institutions outside of the Nass Valley. It is obvious that there is a large potential for post-secondary education among the Nisga'a. Therefore, another major issue is that the WWN has to be well organized to attract the potential.

Charity Gonu expressed her frustration over the fact that some people in the community did not understand that students were getting university credits, although this was a social issue and not really WWN's concern. She stated, "... for them, I think, [the degree programme is] just another sort of ABE thing" (Nov. 9, 1995: Tape No. 3). In the summer of the first year, she wanted a summer job and had one with which she was not content. She stated, "[W]hat I don't see happening is employment opportunity for us, like if we just sit around all

summer doing nothing, what's gonna motivate us to come back [to the WWN in the fall]?" (Nov. 9, 1995: Tape No. 3).

In terms of job creation, the Nisga'a Economic Enterprises Inc. (NEEI) actively works towards economic development in various sectors. However, Matt Moore, the General Manager of the NEEI, stated:

[Y]ou have ... some people, I think, that want to go fast I think that basically we have to ... make sure [if] we've got people, what their skills [are], what ... their experience [is], and got understanding of ... certain business before we ... move into. If we don't, we could end up ... hiring all people that are not Nisga'a people that don't come from the area ... and our people sitting on the side unemployed I prefer ... I guess taking ... slower approach, make sure we develop ... the capabilities in each sectors we go before we move into them (Nov. 29, 1995: Tape No. 11).

A more abstract issue implied by John Mackenzie was a difficulty of integration of the Nisga'a values and the Western values. The Protocol Agreement states, "Research and teaching of Nisga'a language and culture will be developed in accordance with Nisga'a and Western principles of scholarly integrity consistent with our joint commitment to pursue the higher standards in teaching and research" (UNBC and WWN 1993:1). However, John Mackenzie stated, "[W]e are attempting to try and develop an institution which is consistent with ... Nisga'a culture, but which is continually being forced to [operate] in ... a Western mode" (Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 6).

When we had a field trip to the Nass Valley in March 1995, at a meeting people said that the Nisga'a would like to award master's degrees or doctoral degrees to people who had outstanding skills in fishing, carving, and other Nisga'a traditional practices. Generally speaking, in Western education, if a person attends institutions for a certain number of years, reads a certain numbers of books, and writes a certain number of pages of a dissertation, that person may obtain a master's degree or a doctoral degree. Furthermore, it may

be possible for it to happen even if the person spends most of the time in a library. That person does not necessarily have to be a good learner of life and the world or a good instructor to younger generations.

However, when a Nisga'a is a skillful person, that person must be a careful learner who is good at observing and listening to other people patiently, which is a radically different way of learning from that of the West. In addition to that, if a Nisga'a is a skillful person who is highly respected, that person must also be an excellent instructor who is capable of leading the next generation.

On the one hand, it seems to be valuable to recognize Nisga'a skills with Western degrees, because those people's skills and profound knowledge are worthy of those degrees and more. On the other hand, there is a question in my mind. I believe that those people's knowledge and wisdom have to be recognized and integrated into the school system. However, I also wish to pose a question for further consideration, "Can this profound wisdom be measured by an academic degree from the Western education system?"

CHAPTER FOUR: DIRECTION OF NISGA'A EDUCATION

Since the Nisga'a were not satisfied with a school system governed by the dominant value, they started to work towards Nisga'a control of education as early as the early 1950s. School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) gave them more control. Nisga'a students now do not have to leave the Nass Valley when they finish elementary school, and can immerse themselves in Nisga'a traditions. However, by joining the provincial school system, they had to define control of education in accordance with a Western framework. Today, they are still seeking more control of education.

This non-Nisga'a framework remains a problem, but the Nisga'a have clear ideas of their direction. This chapter will depict the Nisga'a conception of education, and what the Nisga'a see as a realistic way to achieve their goal.

INDIAN CONTROL OF INDIAN EDUCATION – NATIONAL INDIAN BROTHERHOOD AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

This section examines the historical background for a policy paper entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education*, and what happened in Canada after that policy paper.

In the 1960s, the American civil rights movement crossed the border and spread into Canada. This movement stimulated the movement of self-determination of Aboriginal people (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:14). The federal government decided to treat Aboriginal people the same as it treated non-Aboriginal people. Pierre Trudeau's liberal government issued a policy in a draft paper entitled *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969*, better known as the White Paper. This policy attempted to remove all the treaties

and legislative bases that parted Aboriginal people from non-Aboriginal people (Government of Canada 1969:6). Since this policy met strong resistance from many Aboriginal groups, the White Paper was not enacted as official policy (Brizinski 1989:185).

In 1972, partly as an answer to the White Paper, the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) issued a paper entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education*, and asserted that Aboriginal people must reclaim their right to "parental responsibility" and "local control," and that only Aboriginal people could develop Aboriginal education based on Aboriginal people's values adapted to the modern world (National Indian Brotherhood 1972:3).

This policy paper by NIB was presented to the Department of Indian Affairs, and then Indian Affairs Minister Jean Chretien promised to give Aboriginal people what they demanded. Chretien stated in 1972:

When Indian parents ask that the curriculum recognize their cultural values and customs, their language and their contribution to mankind, do not make a mistake, they are not asking for the moon. Their request is legitimate and reasonable (cited in Comeau and Santin 1990:98).

The federal government quickly accepted the principles of the NIB and signed an agreement with the NIB to adopt the policy of Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education (Barman, Hebert, and McCaskill 1986:15; Wotherspoon and Satzewich 1993:129).

Although the definition of "control" was left unclear (Comeau and Santin 1990:102), the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) transferred control of programmes to Aboriginal communities by delegating the administration of programmes to the band councils. However, the DIA continue to control administrative decisions, and allotted the money to the bands to administer the programmes. Numerous Aboriginal bands have operated schools on reserves

since 1972 without a clear definition of "control." Wotherspoon and Satzewich state that in the decade between 1975-76 and 1985-86, the number of schools operated by Aboriginal bands increased from 53 to 229 (1993:129).

Many Aboriginal bands exercised this delegated control through Aboriginal education authorities which elected representatives from the reserves (Comeau and Santin 1990:99). For maximum efficiency, these representatives should have had rights and responsibilities to hire staff, coordinate curricula, and manage budgets. However, in fact, these factors have continuously been controlled by the federal government. For Aboriginal people, the main obstacle to really having control of their education has been the Indian Act. Sections 114 to 122 of the Indian Act deal with Aboriginal education. The main sections which prevent Aboriginal people's control of education are sections 114 and 115.

Section 114 authorizes the Minister to enter into agreements for Aboriginal education with:

- (a) the government of a province;
- (b) the Commissioner of the Yukon Territory;
- (c) the Commissioner of the Northwest Territory;
- (d) a public or separate school board; and
- (e) a religious or charitable organization.

Section 115 allows the Minister to "provide for and make regulation with respect to standards for buildings, equipment, teaching, education, inspection and discipline in connection with schools; ... " (Government of Canada 1989:56).

Although the Department of Indian Affairs transferred the control of Aboriginal education to Aboriginal people, there was no legal basis allowing Aboriginal people to have real control of their own education. The Department of Indian Affairs, in the name of delegating authority to Aboriginal people, reduced its support for developing Aboriginal education, and thereby saved money. The policy failed, and Aboriginal students' drop-out rate from schools

was still high. When the *Indian Education Paper* was issued in 1982, it revealed that the government simply transferred the control of the poorly developed programmes to people who did not have the experience to improve them (Comeau and Santin 1990:102).

After the *Indian Education Paper* was issued, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), which was established in 1981, surveyed all band leaders to analyze the mistakes in the existing policy and to suggest ways to rectify them. In 1988, the Assembly reported what the NIB had asserted sixteen years earlier: The new AFN paper required the federal government to give up its administrative functions and to be a funding agency. It also asserted the necessity of flexibility to allow individual bands to develop programmes which could meet Aboriginal people's goals (Comeau and Santin 1990:102-103). Aboriginal leaders demanded that traditional Aboriginal teaching methods be considered.

Although the federal government did not respond to the demands in the AFN paper, and thereby avoided making any real change, and although there is no legal basis for Indian control of Indian education, "the practice is somewhat more liberal than the law" (Longboat 1987:36). In recent years, Aboriginal groups have gradually obtained more control of their education. Many Aboriginal bands hire teachers, and also participate in designing and building schools and in establishing the curricula.

While the definition of "control" was left unclear, there was no clear definition of "Indian education" as well. According to Eber Hampton, there are five definitions of Indian education. They are 1. traditional education; 2. schooling for self-determination; 3. schooling for assimilation; 4. education by Indians; and 5. Indian education *sui generis* (1995:8). Hampton further describes Indian education *sui generis* as a self-determined education using Aboriginal

methods, Aboriginal structures, Aboriginal content, and Aboriginal personnel (1995:10).

NISGA'A DEFINITION OF INDIAN CONTROL OF INDIAN EDUCATION

The Nisga'a situation is unique in terms of the educational structure. Unlike many other Aboriginal groups that established band-operated schools, the Nisga'a decided to join the provincial school district system in 1975. Like many other Aboriginal groups, the Nisga'a pursued more "control" of education for the sake of their children's well-being.

However, since both "Indian control" and "Indian education" do not have any clear interpretation, "Indian control of Indian education" has not been well defined. Furthermore, it is assumed that different Aboriginal groups have different definitions of Indian control of Indian education. Considering this situation, the following part will examine the Nisga'a definition of Indian control of Indian education.

Nisga'a Personnel and the Cultural Component at the School

One of the interview questions was "What is Indian control of Indian education for you?" More than two thirds of the interviewees who answered this question thought that it was rights of decision making. This includes rights to develop curriculum, to hire personnel, to spend money according to their will, to set standards of their education, and to decide what is good for their children.

Five Nisga'a responded that Indian control of Indian education for them meant having Nisga'a people at all or most of the positions in the education field. The following was an interview with Laura Welde, the education administrator of Gitlakdamiks Band Council:

Laura Welde

And I guess when you are talking about Indian control of Indian education, it's eventually to have all our own teachers teaching within our own school district.

M. Kiwako Okuma

You mean not to have non-Nisga'a teachers?

Laura Welde

I think that's good in some respect, but that [having all Nisga'a teachers] was the initial goal of this whole [district], to get our own district, was to see our own Nisga'a teaching at NESS ... that was the ... goal that we are still working on ... they [children] see their [relatives teaching] ... oh, gee, teacher, my uncle, my cousin, and ... I think ... that's incentive enough (Nov. 21, 1995: Tape No. 27).

However, Art Tindill, a non-Nisga'a principal of the NESS, stated "If Native control of Native education means that all teachers must be Nisga'a ... they have a problem ... because the public school system makes no distinction between ethnicity" (Oct. 24, 1995: Tape No. 25). Although the school board, of which four out of five are Nisga'a, is authorized to hire teachers by the School Act, it is difficult for the Nisga'a to occupy all the teaching positions.

Four interviewees emphasized Nisga'a cultural input into the public school system as an important aspect of Indian control of Indian education. An interesting thing is that the four interviewees are all young people who received their elementary and secondary education in the Nass Valley. One of the interviewees, the grade-12 male student, whose mother did not want him to be identified, had written down his answers before the interview. He raised an important request in the interview:

Student

First, I would like to ask you not to use "Indian."

M. Kiwako Okuma

M'm, I know. Do you know about the policy paper? [I]t was issued by National Indian Brotherhood in 1972, partly to answer the ... White Paper by the Trudeau government in 1969 ... that policy paper's title was "Indian Control of Indian Education." So that's why I used this word, but usually I don't use this word.

Student

M'm, yeah. Well my answer [to] this [question] is ... I really don't know what the Nisga'a definition of the question is, but I believe that the Nisga'a definition of First Nation control of First Nation education is to have more our own culture tied in with our own studies, and also to have more First Nation people teaching these courses (Nov. 23, 1995: Tape 28).

Cynthia Gonu, a student of the WWN, responded to the question:

For me that would be ... to ... learn the bilingual, bicultural programme, that will integrate our ... culture with the ... Westernized education ... that will help with the ... children that are growing up because they have both, they will have the opportunity of having their culture and language and learning [in the school and] graduating [from] it (Nov. 30, 1995: Tape No. 3).

Harry Nyce Jr., an administrator of the Gitwinksihlkw Band Council, also mentioned the importance of Nisga'a culture. He responded, "For us, it [Indian control of Indian education] establishes and maintains the Nisga'a culture and Nisga'a language right from nursery all the way to post-secondary education" (Nov. 27, 1995: Tape No. 20).

David Griffin, a teacher of the NESS, stated that there were aspects of the Nisga'a culture that the students needed to learn at the schools, and that if the Nisga'a could integrate those aspects into the various subjects, it would be Indian control of Indian education (Nov. 17, 1995: Tape No. 4).

Identifying a Child's Given Gift

The previous section described responses which focused on the institutionalized setting. There were also other thoughtful responses to the same

question. This section describes several people's stress on noting a child's given gift and life-long learning.

In addition to rights of decision making in various fields, Deanna Nyce emphasized:

I as a parent, Indian control of Indian education is that I can, ... with the elders in my family and in the community, ... identify the gifts that my children are portraying ... our children are very very talented, incredibly talented human beings (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15).

Shirley Morven also emphasized the children's dignity:

I should be able to go out and tell people that our children are intelligent, and that they learn, as the same as anyone else, their given opportunity ... I should have a right to expect that the children here will be treated with dignity with respect (Oct. 25, 1995: Tape No. 13).

Indian control of Indian education for Alvin McKay means that parents can lead their children to learn about life. He stated:

... there were supportive group ... that have responsibilities towards their education of young people who are outside the school. [T]hey are in the community, and one of these are the parents and the parents are well informed and they are so much aware of the responsibilities that they have to carry out towards the learning of the children Good parents will teach life values (Nov. 10, 1995: Tape No. 7).

According to him, since the Nisga'a live in a matrilineal society, not only the parents of a person, but also the mother's brothers and sisters, especially their older ones are major counselors as well.

Although some people's responses to this question regarding Indian control of Indian education focused on the right of decision making, every interviewee emphasized the indispensability of Nisga'a cultural values in the children's education throughout the interview. This unanimity of opinion

indicates the importance of this notion to the Nisga'a and reflects the Nisga'a philosophy of "one bowl, one people, one vision."

Nisga'a Watchfulness

As briefly described in Chapter One, Nisga'a traditional education was carried out through careful observation by the adult who sought the best in the child. This quality of observation resembles what is expressed as "watchfulness" by Ted T. Aoki. He defines authentic teaching as the following:

Authentic teaching is watchfulness, a mindful watching overflowing from the good in the situation that the good teacher sees. In this sense, good teachers are more than they do; they are the teaching (1992:26).

He continues by saying that when people talk about "thinking," they fail to see other possibilities of understanding "thinking." He states, "What seems to be concealed and hence unseen and unheard is an understanding of thinking that might be understood as thoughtfulness – thoughtfulness as an embodied doing and being – thought and soul embodied in the oneness of the lived moment" (1992:26). What Aoki states has been existing in the Nisga'a traditional teaching without being completely destroyed in spite of the oppressive educational system.

How Dennis Nyce became a totem pole carver shows the existing watchfulness and thoughtfulness among the Nisga'a. Dennis Nyce's grandfather on his father's side and several uncles are carvers. He said:

So I guess it was in my blood that sooner or later ... I would become a carver. And ... the teaching ... was done in the old methods, the old ways of teaching. My father's seen that I had taken an interest and was fairly good at doing art work, and he wanted ... me to become a carver. [S]o he asked ... Alver Tait, who was already ... a master carver, if he would teach me, instruct me to become a carver, he's seen my quality that I was able to do ... and

this is how the old method of teaching was done (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 18).

Dennis Nyce's statement echoes the policy paper "Indian Control of Indian Education" which states, " ... we assert that only Indian people can develop a suitable philosophy of education based on Indian values adapted to modern living" (National Indian Brotherhood 1972:3). As many Aboriginal people have said, Aboriginal people are not trying to turn clocks back to the pre-contact era of the longhouse and the teepee. On the contrary, they are trying to adapt to the modern world without losing their cultural values. This valuable watchfulness in the Nisga'a tradition can be integrated into the modern school system.

What Indian control of Indian education means for the Nisga'a is exactly what the policy paper stated: the Nisga'a develop a suitable philosophy of education based on the Nisga'a values adapted to modern living. Furthermore, it is to preserve the Nisga'a sense of "authentic teaching" in "imaginative creation of a form of consciousness and way of life." It is a self-determined education using models of education structured by the Nisga'a culture.

NISGA'A CONTROL OF EDUCATION

The previous section described what Indian control of Indian education means to the Nisga'a. The following section will examine whether the Nisga'a think they have full control of education. The interview question was "Do you think the Nisga'a have full control of education?" Among the eighteen interviewees who answered this question, eleven people answered "No," and seven people's responses were either "Yes" or not clearly "No." The reasons for their responses, however, vary.

Affirmative Side

What the "Yes" side people pointed out were that the Nisga'a had their own schools from elementary to post-secondary level, and that there were Nisga'a people working in the school board that was authorized to hire teachers. The following comments illustrate the "Yes" side to the interview question.

Harry Nyce Jr. stated, " ... we are able to ... work with our people to examine what our goals are, and also to ... help them, pass out how to get those goals" (Nov. 27, 1995: Tape No. 20).

Mentioning Nisga'a schools in the valley, Sharlene Morven said, "I think they do [have full control], that's one of the main things they really wanted, our students to go to school here rather than go anywhere else" (Dec. 12, 1995: Tape No. 12).

Cynthia Gonu also stated, " ... considering they have a elementary, secondary, now college university here, yes, I do [think the Nisga'a have full control]" (Nov. 30, 1995: Tape No. 3).

Rosie Robinson stated, "I think they have [full control], because ... at the board office, we have our own people working down there ... there is the one that hire[s] teachers, there is the one that has to go down and interview the teachers" (Nov. 21, 1995: Tape No. 21).

Kathleen Clayton had a little different perspective from these responses. According to her, there has been Nisga'a control of education since the establishment of the school district. However, it has not been community control of education. She stated that there would be more community control of education by the Gitlakdamiks Band through the Local Education Agreement which recently reached between the band and the school board (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2).

The Local Education Agreement specifies direct funding from the federal government to each band. Each band was given a right to negotiate with the school district to get more control for the band. Once this funding system is agreed upon between the band and the school district, each band gives the federal money to the school district. In some school districts, this funding system will bring more power to Aboriginal bands on Aboriginal students' education. However, in the Nisga'a case, there will not be a big change, even though two bands, Gitlakdamiks and Kincolith, reached the agreement with the school district. Kathleen Clayton's interpretation of this agreement is that things will not be changed radically, but that there will be more input from the local band.

Obstacles for Full Control

The following responses discuss the obstacles for full control that were identified by the "No" side. Several people of the "No" side pointed out that because the Nisga'a schools were under the provincial school system, they had several elements to follow, such as policies, regulations, and curricula, that are prescribed in the School Act and, therefore, outside Nisga'a control.

Irene Griffin, Bert McKay, and Jacob McKay pointed out the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), which is a Teachers' Union, as one of the obstacles that keeps the Nisga'a from obtaining full control of education. Irene Griffin stated, "They [some non-Nisga'a teachers] probably have never been out for up-grading or anything like that, but we have our own students coming back that want to teach, and they can't get a job because the union is so closed" (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 5). Even if a teacher was a non-productive teacher, the Nisga'a had to pay high salaries according to the seniority of the teacher (Jacob McKay Dec. 12, 1995: Tape No. 9).

Bert McKay also referred to the union:

... there are 2 unions, teachers' union, BCTF, and the labor union ... CUPE ... [O]ne sits by the other ... [T]hey shut out the school down over 6 weeks ... there is no reason for that, that wasn't why we created the district ... I'm not afraid to say that people who are teaching have no right for teaching, because teaching is a gift ... it's not a pay (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 8).

Although the union might bring many protections to the teacher, the Nisga'a suffered from the strike that shut the school for weeks. The 1990 annual report of School District No. 92 regards the five-week strike by the Nisga'a Teachers Association as a "disastrous happening." The annual report points out some examples of the damage of the strike. They are:

1. Loss of instructional time to all students;
2. Loss of prime time to sum-up the year's work;
3. Loss of time to prepare for exams; and
4. Loss of time to plan for the next school year.

As a result of these losses:

1. The grade 4, 7, and 10 students were prevented from writing Ministry Assessment tests in Social Studies;
2. The grade 12 students were not fully prepared to write the Provincial Exams;
3. All schools had to resort to averages for the year's work, without the students benefiting from final exams;
4. Many students developed a negative attitude of disrespect towards schools and teachers (hence, the upsurge in behavioral problems in the district.)

The Nisga'a confirm that in addition to the policy of teacher hiring, it is the union itself that is a big obstacle in the provincial school system. Although the union may have brought positive aspects to the Nass Valley, it sometimes works, according to some Nisga'a, negatively. However, as long as the Nisga'a

are under the provincial educational system, the union is unavoidable. Jacob McKay stated, " ... if we were to deunionize ... probably the Minister would say that you are no longer a public school. That's a big risk, isn't it?" (Dec. 12, 1995: Tape No. 9).

Initially, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) was a mere federation which required a teacher to be a member of it. The old School Act describes, "A condition of employment for a teacher in the B.C. public schools is to be a member of the B.C. Teachers' Federation" (Nicholls 1980:79). When the BCTF was unionized in 1989, the School Act was amended. The new School Act declares:

If there is a conflict between the Labour Relations Code or the application of the Labour Relation Code to teachers and this Act, this Act prevails, but nothing in this Act limits

(a) the right of the Provincial union, as defined in the Public Education Labour Relations Act, to declare or authorize a strike ... (School Act section 28).

However, as Bert McKay powerfully stated, teaching is a gift for the Nisga'a, which perhaps means that "pedagogical thoughtfulness is a multifaceted and complex mindfulness towards children" (Max van Manen 1991:8), and that, as Aoki stated, "teachers are the teaching." There is a very profound conflict between the Nisga'a educational value where teaching is a gift, and the non-Aboriginal educational value where teaching is a skill.

The lack of monetary control is another reason for the "No" side, and was pointed out by Deanna Nyce and Jacob McKay. To understand the nature of the problem, it is necessary to depict the funding system for Aboriginal education. The British North America Act and the Indian Act define that it is the federal government's responsibility to fund Aboriginal education. In the early 1950s, the Master Tuition Agreement was arranged between the Education Services of the federal government and the provincial government. The federal government

discharged its duty by paying for the Aboriginal students attending provincial secondary schools instead of building separate secondary schools. By the early 1960s, the Master Tuition Agreement was expanded from kindergarten to grade seven (McKay and McKay 1987:69).

Under the Master Tuition Agreement, the federal government provides funds to the province according to the number of Aboriginal students. The fund is distributed to the provincial school districts to be used for Aboriginal language programmes, Aboriginal culture programmes, and so forth (Deanna Nyce Oct. 24, 1995 Tape No. 15).

However, because there was no accountability for the fund, the money was regarded as soft money or "extra Indian Dollars" by school districts and the provincial government. With the exception of School District No. 92 which had made an effort to create the language and culture programme, the fund was used by school districts for "wonderful band programmes traveling all over the world, sports programmes traveling all over the world" (Deanna Nyce Oct. 24, 1995 Tape No. 15), and other non-Aboriginal programmes.

This colonial funding system, however, has changed because of a great deal of pressure. Today, every school district has to be accountable for the fund for Aboriginal students.

The Nisga'a, as a provincial school district, receive financing from the provincial government as well as from the federal government. However, the amount has not been enough to establish what the Nisga'a wish to have. "[B]y means of the Master Tuition Agreement, the federal government was able to escape its major responsibility for financing the basic costs of Indian education by making a token payment to the province towards the total cost of education" (McKay and McKay 1987:69-70).

Deanna Nyce believes that until the Nisga'a had monetary control, they would not have full control of education. She stated:

If a person has full control of ... education ... [the person] also [has] a finance system to do it. And right now, if you are looking at School District 92, the money is coming from the provincial government ... so until there is enough economic base here [there is no full control], but there should be, because if you travel up the Nass road, you see our economic base leaving every day [They have been] extracting resources here since the early 1950s maybe prior to that ... If that stays here we would have a wonderful education system, and there would be definite control of education (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15 and 16).

Although she thinks that the Nisga'a have the right to receive the fund from the provincial government, this funding is not adequate for the needs of Nisga'a youth. Furthermore, in order to receive the money from the provincial government, the people have to follow provincial regulations, which is a problem discussed earlier.

Jacob McKay stated, "[W]e don't have the development dollars ... since the creation of this district." The Nisga'a have had to look for small amount of funds wherever they could obtain money to develop programmes (Dec. 12, 1995: Tape No. 9).

Harry Nyce Jr., who thinks that the Nisga'a have almost full control of education, also recognizes the lack of monetary control. He stated, "Probably I would say, maybe ... [the Nisga'a have] 90% [control], because ... I guess the funding portion of it still ... comes from ... outside of the valley" (Nov. 27, 1995: Tape No. 20).

Shirley Morven's perception about full control of education was more introspective compared to other responses. The following comes from an interview with Shirley Morven:

M. Kiwako Okuma

So, thinking of all the rights which you think you should have, do you think the Nisga'a have full control of education?

Shirley Morven

[N]o, not really! [T]here's a distance to go yet [T]he influence of missionaries and the ... Department of Indian Affairs is still here [T]here are number of people who are still cautious, they are not able to take risks, or to take steps to [full control of education] (Oct. 25, 1995: Tape No. 13 and 14).

Immediately after this statement, she said that she should not say "there are number of people," and indicated that there were still a small number of people who were like that.

The Nisga'a language instructor, who did not want to be identified, pointed out that it is necessary to train more Nisga'a people to get full control (Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 28).

Since the Agreement-in-Principle was reached by both the Nisga'a and the two levels of governments as a step to a treaty, it is hard to say if the Nisga'a will remain in the provincial school system when self-government is realized. As described above, there are several conflicts and contradictions for the Nisga'a if they stay under the provincial system. Sally-Anne Nyce stated, "I think there is still a lot we have to do ... things in a way we want to do" (Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 20).

To accomplish what the Nisga'a want, the Nisga'a have to resolve these contradictions and conflicts, but these are very difficult problems as long as the Nisga'a remain in the provincial system. Therefore, the Nisga'a may need to pursue another model of education when self-government is realized.

However, being a provincial school district definitely brought positive changes to Nisga'a children. Those who responded that the Nisga'a did not have full control of education are still working towards what they think is full control.

As Ed McMillan stated, full control does not occur like turning a page of a book. It is a slow process (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 10).

Several people in the "No" side stated that being a provincial school district has been the best way among several different choices that they had. Jacob McKay stated:

When ... this school system was established, at no time ... our leaders had to say that we would ... go off and turn into and establish a ... private school or school that ... had nothing to do with the current ... type of public education in BC. [W]e wanted to be part of portion of that (Dec. 12, 1995: Tape No. 9).

Deanna Nyce also emphasized the comparative success of the school district:

[The school district] worked well for us. I think ... that we have the very critical component in Nisga'a language and culture centre programme ... and children being able to go to school here, because up to that time high school students were shipped out, we had tremendously high drop-out rate. And ... when we got this school district, there were a lot of good things happened. [W]e got elders in the community. [A]ll of the communities were very strong. [T]hey said, "It is important for our kids to learn about themselves first, and they feel good about themselves" (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15 and 16).

THE NISGA'A GOAL OF EDUCATION

Citing Gael High Pine, Eber Hampton states, "Her first paragraph gripped my heart, 'It is not important to preserve our tradition, it is important to allow our tradition to preserve us'" (1995:22). This powerful statement indicates that tradition is not a substance which people can hold. Rather, tradition is what gives an identity to a people or a nation, and exists in people's lives. Traditional culture does not mean, as many people misunderstand, fragments of traditional music, dance, clothes, or any other tangible materials, but living knowledge.

In Canadian cities, people may have seen an advertisement such as "Japanese Culture Course: Let's Make Japanese Traditional Paper Dolls." In such a classroom, what an instructor teaches is not Japanese culture at all, instead, he or she teaches techniques of how to make Japanese traditional paper dolls. If the instructor is a Japanese-born person, learners may think that what the instructor teaches is authentic Japanese culture. However, culture can never be taught in a classroom, because culture is in people's lives.

Language, as Bert McKay said, is inseparable from a culture. He stated, "If you allow your language to die, your culture is dying automatically" (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 7). Although there are many people who are not fluent speakers of Nisga'a but preservers of Nisga'a traditions, to revitalize the language has been very important. The Nisga'a have employed a bilingual and bicultural philosophy since prior to the inception of the school district. This bilingualism is based on an idea that "a person who is fluent and strong in his/her mother tongue (Nisga'a) ... can more effectively master a second language (English)" (McKay and McKay 1987:75). Ideally, the Nisga'a language must be in daily use. In fact, however, most people's daily language is still English and it is the Nisga'a language that is taught at schools both inside and outside of the Nass Valley.

When one takes a look at Nisga'a language education, one finds the tremendous violence of colonization and the reality that the Nisga'a children have to learn their mother tongue as a second language in schools. No Japanese living in Japan can imagine a situation in which they would have to learn Japanese in schools. The Japanese language has always been there in the country with people's lives since their birth, as a language should be and as the Nisga'a language should be.

However, language classes and culture classes surely help people to return to a culture when a culture has suffered from colonization by an external power. When the traditional educators in a family and community can not, as a result of colonization, teach their children, schools provide an alternative. Considering the Nisga'a situation, locating their schools in their cultural ground is a positive step to restoring their culture.

Nisga'a Ideal of Education

Max van Manen states that education is a complex concept, and that education's meanings and significance overlap with those of pedagogy. He compares the North American notion of education and the European notion of pedagogy. "[T]he term *education* in North America is mainly employed to refer to the teaching and learning of children and adults in institutionalized settings." On the other hand, the European notion of pedagogy has a different emphasis "and includes the domains of parenting and education in general, as well as the specialized fields of counseling, therapy, psychological referrals, aspects of social work, and so forth." Pedagogy means that "adults are living with children for the sake of those children's well-being, growth, maturity, and development." Pedagogy, of course, includes school learning (1991:28).

Van Manen's comparison of the notion of education and that of pedagogy is crucial when one thinks of the Nisga'a concept of education, where institutionalized settings were not part of the tradition. The Nisga'a concept of education is very different from what van Manen describes as the North American notion of education. It better resembles one notion of pedagogy. The philosophical basis for the Nisga'a pedagogy is "within the pursuit of knowledge, therein one will find the true meaning of life" (McKay and McKay

1987:64). The following section focuses on how the Nisga'a see the ideal of education.

Total Learning

Another of the interview questions was "What is your ideal of education?"

The responses indicate the importance of total learning.

Alvin McKay's ideal of education was not only for "children's well-being, growth, maturity, and development," but also for the Nisga'a Nation's. He stated:

[T]hey learn everything about life, their lives, so that they can carry out the initial Nisga'a purpose of life, and that is to perpetuate life, and as they do that they strengthen their own family, strengthen the nation (Nov. 10, 1995: Tape No. 7).

Irene Griffin's statement was interesting, because it also stated what was critical to van Manen's notion of North American education. The following is the interview with Irene Griffin:

Irene Griffin

Ideal? Ideal education? It's [got to be] totally ... rounded, I guess.

M. Kiwako Okuma

Rounded?

Irene Griffin

Rounded, to be educated in all ways.

M. Kiwako Okuma

M'm, not only in formal way?

Irene Griffin

Yeah, in all ways, because education takes many forms I think, [we] have some ... real educated people, but they are kinda ... dumb (laugh) ... (M. Kiwako Okuma: Yeah, yeah, in many cases), not very wise at all, because ... they are not rounded, they've only concentrated on one thing and have not paid attention to, say, the social side, culture side (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 5).

The Nisga'a woman, who did not want to be identified, pointing out philosophy of sharing, stated:

[T]he whole community needs to come together and recognize that [issue] and begin to input that programmes that is supported [by] the share philosophy of healing ... when young children, 5 or 6 years old, go to school [and] when their parents address their issues, find a place [where] ... there is a system developed to help them to address their issues, I think that will impact ... transmitting tremendously and more positively (Nov. 29, 1995: Tape No. 29).

For Ray Gonu, the ideal is an educational system that keeps the Nisga'a culture alive, while it prepares the people to enter into mainstream society that is governed by different values (Nov. 1, 1995: Tape No. 4).

The Nisga'a language instructor, who had taught at the school for years and did not want to be identified, stated that many students "don't seem to have any bones in their bodies" and "they don't have the goal." She emphasized that education is something that was there around people and what people can do is to reach out and to make something of themselves (Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 28).

Teresa McMillan, a teacher of the NESS, and Ben Haizimsque, President of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC), asserted the importance of learning in both institutional and non-institutional situations.

I think it's a combination of a lot of things. You have both formal and informal education, and a lot of informal is very important as well (Teresa McMillan Nov. 6, 1995: Tape No. 11).

Ideal education? It's kind of what the school is striving for, and it's fine tuning thing more than anything. That is, there are two kinds of education for us really, I mean education itself is a life-long thing, so there is also formal education ... and there is also education as a person, as [an] individual (Ben Haizimsque Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 6).

Nisga'a Culture Taught in the School

Many people stressed the integration of the Nisga'a culture and the school curriculum. Ed McMillan and Laura Welde emphasized the use of the Nisga'a language as an ideal of education. Ed McMillan stated, "... if everybody was Nisga'a, then you could speak to give directions, instructions, lectures in Nisga'a to the students, so everything would be done in Nisga'a." However, he did not think that this ideal would be realized under the provincial school system (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 10).

The following is from the interview with Laura Welde:

M. Kiwako Okuma

What is your ideal of education in the Nass Valley, thinking of the future?

Laura Welde

Well, [what] I'd like to see is to have eventually all our students, like starting even before that, to be able to speak our language fluently.

M. Kiwako Okuma

In the daily life?

Laura Welde

Yeah, on the day-to-day basis, that's what I'd like to see happening, because I think it does help the individual [T]o me it's like knowing your own self (Nov. 21, 1995: Tape No. 27).

The following are the voices of people who asserted the need for the integration of Nisga'a traditional culture and the school education curriculum:

And there are a lot of people, they can do that kind of [cultural] instruction, and it needs to be recognized in the public school system (Jacob McKay Dec. 12, 1995: Tape No. 9);

We need to be able to have Nisga'aized science curriculum, we need to be able to have Nisga'aized math curriculum, make it meaningful for Nisga'a students, not only in kindergarten, but at grade 12 and beyond (Deanna Nyce Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15 and 16);

[M]y ideal would be to see Nisga'a language and Nisga'a culture incorporated into all the classes, so that the teachers would be able to ... present some aspect of their classroom teaching through Nisga'a language and including some aspect of Nisga'a culture (David Griffin Nov. 17, 1995: Tape No. 4);

... to have more our own culture tied with our own studies, and also to have more First Nation people teaching these courses (The grade-12 student whose mother did not want him to be identified Nov. 23, 1995: Tape No. 28).

The notion of the integration of the Nisga'a culture and the school curriculum must be critically examined. Madeleine MacIvor acknowledges perceptions which advocate that it is important to use exemplars from the Aboriginal tradition to explain conventional scientific concepts so that students' academic achievement is increased. However, she argues, "educators must realize that this approach is not science education from an Aboriginal perspective, but rather involves the appropriation of Aboriginal content to further the goals of Western school science" (1995:87). She continues:

Another way of incorporating cultural content into the curriculum is to highlight the complementary nature of some traditional teachings and conventional science. This may be valuable in teaching and reinforcing Aboriginal perspectives, but educators should guard against inadvertently telling students that only the perspectives affirmed by conventional science are valuable (1995:87).

Madeleine MacIvor's argument is crucial for people to consider what it means to totally integrate Nisga'a culture into the school curriculum. If it means that teachers use exemplars from the Nisga'a tradition existing in their daily lives, it is not so difficult to implement. In fact, David Griffin stated that he was using the examples of pine mushroom picking in math classes and oolichan grease making in science classes, and that those examples from their daily lives helped the students understand scientific concepts (Nov. 17, 1995: Tape No. 4).

What David Griffin does is necessary when one considers the reality of many Nisga'a students who enter into post-secondary education in mainstream society where many aspects of teaching are dominated by conventional science. "Such an approach is important because it may allow students to succeed with school science, and provide a foundation for future work or study in science-related areas" (Madeleine MacIvor 1995:87). However, when one considers Aboriginalized science, what must not be ignored is that "[t]raditional perspectives stand on their own without verification from conventional science" (Madeleine MacIvor 1995:87). Thus MacIvor's argument advocates what Deanna Nyce asserted. She stated, "[N]ative students ... live in a very scientific world, Dr. Suzuki, David Suzuki says that all the time. Native people who live in this very scientific world are exercising science and mathematics all the time" (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 16).

Nisga'a Pedagogy

Considering all the responses together, the Nisga'a ideal of pedagogy is represented by the expectation that the children learn their ways of life as Nisga'a but not in a situation separated from the modern world. To the people who have been educated in institutions for years, including myself, it may seem inconsistent to pursue both institutional education and traditional non-institutional education at the same time. However, the Nisga'a do not see pursuing the Nisga'a way of life and succeeding in institutional education to be inconsistent.

As described earlier, Nisga'a pedagogy is watchfulness and thoughtfulness, and as the case of how Dennis Nyce became a totem pole carver shows, it is alive in the Nisga'a society. Teachers are the teaching. David Griffin

expressed the notion "teachers are teaching" from his daily experience of teaching:

I think informal education is everything you do and say where you are teaching ... I think it's the way to present something, the intangibles in a classroom [I]t's as important as what's written on a blackboard. I think informally we teach respect ... that's not something we write on a blackboard, [but] something we teach through discipline and ... through working together in groups (Nov. 17, 1995: Tape No. 4).

The grade-12 student, whose mother did not want him to be identified, said, "I also like being with children, because I would call myself role model for them" (Nov. 23, 1995: Tape No. 28).

Although many interviewees responded regarding school education, not only the people who are teaching in the classroom, but also parents and community people can be educators. Pedagogues is a more appropriate word for their role rather than educators. As Alvin McKay stated, in the Nisga'a society, not only a person's parents, but also uncles and aunts, especially maternal, are important pedagogues. The pedagogy of parenting and teaching have the same fundamental experience, which is "the human charge of protecting and teaching the young to live in this world and to take responsibility for themselves, for others, and for the continuance and welfare of the world" (van Manen 1991:6-7).

The pedagogy of parenting, however, was interrupted during the era of residential schools and boarding home programmes. Not only had the Nisga'a children lost their parents' and relatives' valuable counseling, but also the parents lost the experience of how to parent teenagers. Bert McKay stated that the Nisga'a parents lost the experience of parenting teenagers and that it had taken a long time to restore the experience. According to him, some people are now in place, but there are some parents who are quite distant from the restoration of parenting (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 8). This is one of the most

difficult aspects of the colonization experience to overcome. For authentic Nisga'a pedagogy to be established in the Nass Valley, it is necessary to restore the Nisga'a way of parenting which, as Alvin McKay stated, leads children to understand the larger meaning of life.

The Nisga'a traditional way of teaching, which is practical teaching, can be integrated into the formal teaching in the school. Criticizing the nature of science and technology teaching, van Manen states:

Pedagogy is primarily neither a science nor a technology Science and technology by their very nature cut knowledge off from experience by producing generalizations and technical principles that abstract from experience (1991:9).

He gives an example of the engineering field where students learn the scientific theory of bridge building from a teacher who may never have built any bridge. He also states, "Experience can open up understanding that restores a sense of embodied knowing." Van Manen's interpretation of experience and knowing seems to share fundamental notions of pedagogy with the Nisga'a.

Dennis Nyce explained the practical Nisga'a traditional teaching and learning:

Our way of teaching is we take you as a carver, and we show you what to do. Your instructor will ... show you the proper way to hold a mask while you are carving it, he will show you a proper way to gouge the wood out Your hands on experience is the best teaching method that we know, and ... this is what we were taught ... in order to learn. [Y]ou have to participate ... and we stress that ... you have to do it. So, it's very important ... for children nowadays. [W]e always tell them to listen, not only look at what's happening, but listen to it, otherwise ... you will forget (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 18).

In an interview, Emma Nyce recalled her father, the late Eli Gosnell whom Shirley Morven invited to her classroom. Emma Nyce said:

[T]here is a lot of our own ways [which] will be taught there [at the school] Like the school up there, I love that. If my father was alive ... I don't think he leaves the school. He wouldn't care he is paid or what, but he will teach there. That's how much he wants the young people to learn our tradition. I doubt he wouldn't wanna get paid. That's what happened to some of our people, too (Dec. 4, 1995: Tape No. 19).

She thinks that as long as there are some people who pursue the Nisga'a tradition, the culture will continue to be alive, and that there would be more people who would like to pursue the tradition than who would not. Although the after effects of colonization still exist in the Nass Valley, there are young people who are conscious of the Nisga'a tradition and eager to allow it to preserve the people.

A WAY TO NISGA'A IDEAL OF EDUCATION

The previous section revealed the Nisga'a ideal of education. What they stated were not unrealistic imaginations drawn from their minds. On the contrary, the Nisga'a know what is the realistic way to their goal. The following two sections will discuss how the Nisga'a are moving towards their goal.

Cultural Revival in the Nass Valley

Unlike Japanese society where ceremonies are not necessarily open to children, in Nisga'a society, children are not excluded from cultural practices. In Japan, ceremonies such as funerals and weddings are highly commercialized, especially in big cities. Under such a circumstance, children are not expected or encouraged to learn traditional cultural practices by observing them. Ceremonies tend to be apart from the Japanese daily life and regarded as special events that add some excitement to people's dull daily lives. In Japan, even if the family

members of a dead person are not familiar with how to hold a funeral, a commercial company will carry out the ceremony in place of the family.

On the contrary, in Nisga'a society, ceremonies are part of people's daily lives. Children are important participants in the ceremony and are expected to play their roles and learn how to carry out the ceremony for their turn in the future. In Nisga'a society, a feast is held according to the clan system. When a funeral or a stone moving feast of a dead person is to be held, clan members of the concerned person are expected to help with the feast by acquiring gifts and money and cooking. Children in the clan are not excluded. The same thing can be said for wedding feasts.

I attended one totem pole raising feast in Gitwinksihlkw, one funeral feast in New Aiyansh, one wedding feast in New Aiyansh, and several stone moving feasts in New Aiyansh and Greenville. In all of the feasts, children were active participants. In the feasts, Nisga'a stew and bread were served with other food and drink to guests at the beginning of the feast. This was done by the women of the concerned person's clan. Among the women, there were many teenage girls serving at tables.

In the Nisga'a feasts, collecting money plays an important part. There were many young girls and boys who gave money and helped adults to collect money from their friends and relatives. Little children were sitting in the hall where the feast was being carried out. Although there were many little children who were too young to actively participate in a feast, experiencing the cultural practice is very important.

These feasts, however, were outlawed by the Indian Act from 1884 to 1951. "Attendance at a potlatch was punishable by jail terms of two to six months" (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993:10). After 1884, these feasts went underground (Brizinski 1989:174; Deanna Nyce Nov. 11, 1995: Tape No. 17).

Although these feasts were continuously held underground, people did not dance or wear regalia for years. Kathleen Clayton stated:

[O]ur regalia were just really introduced back to us in 1970 ... when our dancing came back. We never danced for years and years. [The year when] first time we danced was 1971 And my grandfather revived that ... but we did a lot of practice to get to do that ... and then also a lot of work making the regalia, nobody even saw regalia before (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2).

Irene Griffin also stated:

If you look at the pictures from before, when they had feasts people wore the sashes, they didn't have their blankets, because it wasn't a good thing ... you were punished for doing that. So it's all just coming back and it's a good thing that we still have people here that could lead us back, they remember the old time, so that didn't totally die (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 5).

In 1977, after the revision of the Indian Act in 1951, the first totem pole was erected in New Aiyansh to celebrate the unity of the Nisga'a Nation achieved by the establishment of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a). Some people said that Elders and chiefs had been so emotional at the pole raising that many of them had been crying. It was around this time that various cultural events were being reintroduced.

Today, Nisga'a ceremonies are a unique blend of traditional Nisga'a culture and Christianity. E Palmer Patterson cites Hugh and Karmel McCullum to describe the Nisga'a cultural revival: "And again, these observers state, 'Ancient religious ceremonials, including dancing, music, and the beautiful button blanket-robe, are now part of all major feasts both of a tribal and church nature'" (1982:146).

For the Children's Future

When the interviews were being carried out, the Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) for a treaty between the Nisga'a and the two levels of government was in the final stage of negotiation. In the interviews, many interviewees, expecting changes in the education field when the AIP was reached, responded, "When the Agreement-in-Principle is accepted" or "When we could have our own government" The AIP was signed on February 15, 1996, while this thesis was being written.

Alvin McKay thought that there would not be a radical change. He stated:

We are not going out to ... start a new educational system. What's been happening for 21 years, there are many good things, resulting from it [the school district]. There are many good things about the happenings (Nov. 10, 1995: Tape No. 7).

He sees the advantage of having authority over their education as the capability for the Nisga'a to deal with things right in the Nass Valley, "to fix something right on a spot," and "to get into the system again," instead of flying to Victoria to do so as they do now (Nov. 10, 1995: Tape No. 7).

The Nisga'a expect that the treaty gives them more authority to develop culturally relevant curriculum. The following is Section 52 of the AIP:

Nisga'a Central Government may make laws in respect of pre-school to grade 12 education of Nisga'a citizens on Nisga'a Lands, including the teaching of Nisga'a language and culture, provided that any laws will provide for:

- a. Curriculum, examination and other standards which permit articulation between school systems and admission to provincial universities; and
- b. certification of persons teaching subjects other than Nisga'a language and culture to a standard comparable to those of the College of Teachers or the Inspector of Independent Schools, or a requirement for certification by either of these bodies.

The Nisga'a also expect that the treaty will allow them to develop an economy which will be, as Deanna Nyce pointed out, a stable financial resource to provide meaningful education for the Nisga'a children.

Nisga'a Language Use

Although, as described above, there are elements of Nisga'a traditional culture revived in the Nass Valley, there has been cultural interruption brought by colonization. Despite the fact that the Nisga'a had a bilingual and bicultural education philosophy in the school even prior to the inception of the school district, and the Nisga'a Language and Culture Centre has been actively working to restore the language, the Nisga'a language is not in daily use.

This section discusses the degree to which the Nisga'a language is used and understood by the people in their daily lives. Interview questions that focused on this point were "Do you speak your mother tongue?" and "Do you encourage your children (and/or grandchildren) to learn your culture and language?" The following are people's voices:

To certain extent I do [speak the language], I can read it, I can write it, I can understand it ... but when they [people] start talking and talking and talking, I get lost of it I speak ... the ... bit that I know at home with them [her children], and I encourage the grandparents to do the same when they are with them (Marilyn Tait Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 23);

I try very hard to use my language all the time at home ... with my husband ... he understands, but ... he doesn't use it I communicate with my mother a lot ... we speak all Nisga'a She is 82 [years old] and Nisga'a is her first language, she speaks very little English Nisga'a is my first language, too (Rosie Robinson Nov. 21, 1995: Tape No. 21);

I'm not very good in my own Nisga'a language, I wasn't brought up with the language around me all the time Whenever there is [a] feast going on, they [her children and grandchildren] come with

me to the feast and I let them know what's going on [I explain] pointing at who ... is the chief and what their names [are] or things like that (Sharlene Morven Dec. 12, 1995: Tape No. 12);

[I]n feasts, most of the people speak in the Nisga'a language I could understand some. [I]t's a few words that I don't know, and it's from those few words that I will get my definition (Grade-12 student whose mother did not want him to be identified Nov. 23, 1995: Tape No. 28);

[S]omebody talks to me in my language and I answer back in my language (Irene Griffin Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 5);

I'm non-Native ... my husband knows some of his language, but he doesn't know very much of it. So the language is the problem, we can't continue that at home very well ... but with the culture, the kids really learn the culture at home and in the community ... because they come from the big family with high names (Sally-Anne Nyce Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 20);

I went to [a residential] school when I was ten, so today I speak like a ten-year old [child] I understand more than ... I speak ... and I'm not afraid to ask what a word means if I don't know what a word means [I]t's taken for a long time for me to feel comfortable [about] speaking our language (Shirley Morven Oct. 25, 1995: Tape No. 13 and 14);

I do [speak the language]. Even my bird speaks ... he says, "Aam [spelling unknown]." Now that's good I use ... little commands to my grandchildren, they understand it I think that they should start ... when they are small [If] you get used to English and that's it (the language instructor who did not want to be identified Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 28).

Thus, people's responses indicate a range of understanding and using the language. All the interviewees, though not all fluent speakers, indicated that they were encouraging young children to learn the language. However, there are some people who are not interested in attending the feasts or who do not know

anything about their traditional culture. There are some people who do not understand their mother tongue. Kathleen Clayton stated:

I feel very bad for people ... that don't understand the language, [it] must be really hard for people to ... hear the Nisga'a language being spoken in public meetings or wherever, [it] must be hard. [I]t would be like me sitting in a hall full of French people, and listening to them speak French that I don't understand the word they say (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2).

Kathleen Clayton expects the schools in the Nass Valley to be the place where people can learn their culture and language. A language taught in schools seems to be a necessary step for a colonized people to restore their language. However, people must not forget that the goal must be language recovery rather than language teaching.

A Realistic Way to the Nisga'a Ideal of Education

When interviewees responded to the question of what they thought was a realistic way to achieve their ideal of education, they seemed to respond on the assumption that they would have self-government in the near future. The following section examines the responses.

Currently, learning the Nisga'a language is compulsory from kindergarten to elementary school, and even non-Nisga'a students are learning the language. In secondary school, though it is an elective, many students are taking the language. Although the students' daily language is English, teaching the language at school has brought positive effects to their parents who did not know their language. When children come home and speak what they learn at school, parents do not understand what their children say. This has caused some parents to start learning the language at the WWN.

Rosie Robinson stated, "I'm also teaching some of the parents of the children I'm teaching here at school, so I think it will work out few years down

[the] road, because those parents will be there to encourage their children to continue learning" (Nov. 1, 1995: Tape No. 21).

Both Kathleen Clayton (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2) and Sally-Anne Nyce (Nov. 8, 1995: Tape No. 20), who are students of the WWN, mentioned the positive effect of parents' learning the language. They both said that they compared the homework of the language classes with their children, and that sometimes the children would teach the parents the language. The language instructor, who did not want to be identified, commented on the positive effects of the WWN:

[W]e can teach the parents to help their children I hear comments now that they can work with their children at home. [W]hen they come home from school they can test each other, they can ... help each other at home, so that's one of the positive side of the both UNBC [the WWN] and ... language teaching at the school (Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 28).

She also emphasized the importance of the reinforcement of using the language at home. She stated that when she taught at the school, students did not attempt to speak the language but only used a few words, even if they could speak more than a few words. She indicated that the students could manage the language better than they expressed in the classrooms. She emphasized that if the students heard the language spoken at home, they would not be afraid of speaking the language.

In terms of language teaching, several people pointed out the necessity of a language immersion programme. The grade-12 student, whose mother did not want him to be identified, referred to an Inuit girl whom he had met in Vancouver at a healing conference:

[S]he was telling me that the children there ... right from when they were born and when they started the schooling right up to grade, I think it was right through elementary, they spoke in their own

language, they are taught in their own language (Nov. 23, 1995: Tape No. 28).

He implied that the Nisga'a had to have the same kind of immersion programme as the Inuit.

Harry Nyce Jr. stated, "I think that's [language immersion] probably the next step for us in terms of working with the school district to maintain that high level of fluency with our language and also our culture" (Nov. 27, 1995: Tape No. 20).

Kathleen Clayton asserted the necessity of cultural instruction at the school. She stated that children had learned their traditional culture at home from their parents and in the community in their daily lives in the early days. However, because of the cultural interruption, there were many people who could not instruct their children about traditional culture. She asserted the importance of the school to instruct it in place of the parents. Mentioning each curriculum, she said that she would like to see the students learn how to make oolichan grease or half-smoked salmon right from the beginning to the last stage of cooking in home economics. She thinks that the schools should teach the authentic processes of cultural practices. She emphasized:

You don't just go out, pick ... any kind of bark for basket weaving, there are certain types and there are certain ways you prepare it, and ... it's not just [a] two-hour thing ... it could be [a] two-week thing, before you can actually make the product (Kathleen Clayton Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2).

Kathleen Clayton stressed that people had to know their culture which would keep them strong. The Nisga'a society is strongly clan-oriented and community-oriented. When a person is to be married or a person is dead, it is the clan that holds the wedding or the funeral. She stated, "[O]ur culture is keeping us very strong, because we have everything to back us up all [Y]ou can die penniless and then still have a big funeral ... [in which] thousands [of]

people [are] around" (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2). She expects the school to teach important Nisga'a traditional culture.

While Kathleen Clayton focused on the people who cannot instruct their children in traditional culture, Irene Griffin stressed the importance of the reinforcement of cultural instruction at home. She took the example of Sally-Anne Nyce. Sally-Anne Nyce is a non-Aboriginal woman who married into the Nisga'a community. Although Sally-Anne Nyce claimed that both her husband and she could not speak fluent Nisga'a, and that the language was a problem at home, she has tried very hard to learn the Nisga'a culture. Since she married into a culturally strong family with high names, her circumstances have helped her very much. Irene Griffin mentioned an impression of a paper written by Sally-Anne Nyce: "[N]ow she probably knows a lot more than some of our own Nisga'a people, our own Nisga'a young women, and because she learned it at school [the WWN] ... and then also being married into a very strong family culturally ... she ... had the reinforcement at home."

Dennis Nyce also emphasized that people must teach children the Nisga'a culture for the preparation of the children's turn in the future. He said, "... because our elders always say, 'We are not gonna be around forever' and 'You have to take your turn.'" According to him, people in Gitwinksihlkw held the first Unity Day celebration in the village in 1995. Children in the village prepared and hosted the feast like feasts that were held by adults (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 18).

Dennis Nyce said, "[T]hey [children] cooked along with the help of the parents, children did the majority of the work, parents stood by and watched that they [children] were doing properly and informed them if they made a mistake" (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 18). The parents taught the child in the process of the feast through practical teaching: how the host calls the guest's name at the

door; how the host greets the guest when the guest is brought into the hall; how the host seats the guest properly; and what the host says during the time when the guest is served dinner (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 18).

Emma Nyce stated that she was teaching her daughters how to teach their children and how to live following the Nisga'a ancestors' way. She gave an example of gossiping about other people and said that it was not nice and that the Nisga'a ancestors had not done that (Dec. 4, 1995: Tape No. 19).

Alvin McKay emphasized the importance of having children understand what the Nisga'a call the Ayuukhl as well as the language (Nov. 10, 1995: Tape No. 8). In English, the Ayuukhl translates to the Nisga'a Law. Alvin McKay explained that the Ayuukhl is the protocol of the Nisga'a life.

The grade-12 student, whose mother did not want him to be identified, expected that the Ayuukhl Nisga'a would prevail and the Nisga'a language will be spoken at the school (Nov. 23, 1995: Tape No. 28). He is good at cedar bark work and explained different ways of using cedar bark in the interview. He stated that he had learned the cedar bark work by himself through observation and practice.

The student is also leading a Nisga'a dance group in New Aiyansh, which consisted of school students from age five to eighteen. He learned how to dance and how to sing the Nisga'a traditional songs by observing and listening to other people, which is the Nisga'a traditional way of learning. He has taught what he learned to younger students two nights a week. He said, "I think at night is very good, because some students are really bored, out of their minds, and have nothing to do at night but watch TV, and TV I wouldn't agree with" (Nov. 23, 1995: Tape No. 28). He also wants to keep younger children from the bad influences brought by older children such as drugs, which unfortunately exists in the valley, by attracting them into the dance practice. It is hoped, as Emma

Nyce indicated earlier, as long as there are some young people like this student who are eager to preserve the Nisga'a culture, it will survive.

As Bert McKay stated, there are some parents who are quite distant from the ways of Nisga'a parenting (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 8). However, in some cases, children whose parents cannot take care of them are looked after by relatives or community members. A language teacher in Gitwinksihlkw said that she had adopted a boy who had been from such a family (pers. comm. May 26, 1995). Deanna Nyce also said that when she had been the vice-principal at the NESS, she had prepared some snacks and drinks at the school for the students who could not have breakfast at home (pers. comm. June 12, 1995).

Although cultural interruption exists, the establishment of the school district has brought positive progress. Compared to the era of residential schools and the Boarding Home Programme, high school students of today can stay in the valley with their parents and can see and attend cultural activities. They can learn their language at the school, though the language recovery is still not satisfactory. Many young people who attended post-secondary education outside the valley are eager to come back to the Nass Valley to contribute to the Nisga'a Nation.

Alvin McKay said that when he was young he had been told by his grandparents to help people make better lives for themselves (Nov. 10, 1995: Tape No. 7). Irene Griffin also said that she encouraged her children to use their knowledge to help their own people. She explained that because the Nisga'a were family-oriented and village-oriented, young people who had left the Nass Valley had easily become homesick (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 5). This caused young people to come back to the valley.

Deanna Nyce expected the Nisga'a children to redefine their own situation. She stated that the parents had their own experience with racism, and

that the parents should not pass on the fall-out of these experiences and feelings to their children. She said, "Our children could well be exposed to racism, but it's not the same racism, not the same person, not the same world ... my experience is my experience, it's not my children's experience, my children's experience will be much much better" (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15 and 16). Emphasizing the parents' role, she stated:

[W]hen they were young, we gave them all of the information that they need to make those decisions, we gave them lots of practice [at] making decisions when they were young [N]ow as young adults [they are] starting to make their own decisions ... and we need to step out of the pictures, become advisors only, we don't tell them how to make that decision (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15 and 16).

In the interviews, many interviewees said, "work for our people" or "help our own people." People's consciousness of contributing to the Nisga'a Nation is very strong. Even though some interviewees stated that they had a long way to go to be decolonized, there was a strong consciousness and vision of what decolonization meant. This mentality is indispensable for decolonization. In terms of education, the Nisga'a people have a strong ideal and direction to which they are heading. In the responses to the three research questions, the Nisga'a identified the issues to reach their ideal of education. Some fundamental issues derived from the profound difference between the Nisga'a education value and the Western education value to be overcome to reach their ideal of education. As a provincial school district brought into a traditional Aboriginal society, School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) is facing these fundamental issues.

In the following chapter, I will discuss curriculum as one of the fundamental issues in Nisga'a education. I will also consider a possible way to make a fundamental change not only to Aboriginal education, but also to pedagogy more generally.

CHAPTER FIVE : SEEKING FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES

When I was taking "Indian Studies 100" at the University of Regina, more than half of the students in the course were non-Aboriginal. The instructor was an Aboriginal woman, and sometimes her statements were very radical. One day, she said, "White people are still looking for an opportunity to steal our lands." She stated so before many "white people."

Her radical statements must be unfavorable for some students. I saw many non-Aboriginal students drop out, and most of the Aboriginal students complete the course. It was an interesting experience for me, because the drop-out rate in the course was the reverse of what I had expected, Aboriginal drop-out rate being much higher than that of mainstream students. This is only one example, but I learned that when people are taught what they do not want to be taught, they may resist it by dropping out.

In the earlier chapters, I used the term "failure" to describe Nisga'a students' drop-out from schools. However, if one considers the situation in which the Nisga'a students were placed, it is obvious that "failure" is not an appropriate term to describe what happened in the Nisga'a schooling in the past. If "failure" is to be used, it will indicate that there was a "right" way of education, but the Nisga'a were simply incapable of fitting into the "right" way. This was, needless to say, not the case.

In fact, more importantly, there is no Nisga'a term for "failure" that has exactly the same meaning as the English term. In Nisga'a, the closest terms to "failure" are "Nidii Hliskwt (not complete)" and "Nidii Galksi'akhlkwt (did not go through). However, neither terms have the negative sense that the English term "failure" has. Since the Nisga'a believe that learning is a life-long process, and that it starts at a person's birth and ends at the person's death, there is no

failure. According to the Nisga'a education philosophy, a person is in progress throughout his or her life (Deanna Nyce pers. comm. June 27, 1996). Considering these facts, I would express the phenomenon of Nisga'a drop-out as a form of resistance to the colonial education system.

As discussed in the earlier chapters, this education system was not suitable for Nisga'a students, although there were many people who succeeded in it. The system that the Nisga'a experienced before 1975 caused a high drop-out rate of students. As Chapter Three depicted, even after the Nisga'a established the school district, the graduation rate has not been very high (see table 3-1), although it is much better than in earlier days.

To understand the issues in a little more depth, the first part of this chapter examines the reconceptualization of curriculum in mainstream schooling which emerged to challenge the traditional notion of curriculum. Subsequently, this chapter will focus on the concepts of two theorists, Michael W. Apple and Max van Manen whose work has contributed to this reconceptualization of curriculum. Using Apple's theory, I will examine the nature of curriculum to better understand issues that the Nisga'a face. I will use van Manen's theory to illuminate Nisga'a traditional values of teaching children.

THE RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF CURRICULUM

While the Nisga'a were struggling for more control of their children's education, education theory and practice in the larger society was also changing and seeking different ways of education to enhance children's well-being. In the early 1970s a reconceptualization of curriculum emerged in opposition to the traditional curriculum. Prior to that decade, a crisis in traditional curriculum was declared when Joseph J. Schwab described the prevailing curriculum field

to be "moribund" (Pinar et al. 1995:176). In response to this crisis, many scholars opposing the traditional curriculum presented papers which were divided into two themes; "school and society" and "the development of self-awareness and personal growth." These were the two thematic movements in the reconceptualists' work (Pinar et al. 1995:192).

To define reconceptualization, in 1975, William F. Pinar, first, clarified the nature of traditional curriculum writing. He stated:

[I]t is a field characterized by ... the concrete ever-changing tasks of curriculum development, design, implementation, and evaluation. The bulk of this writing has one essential purpose; it is intended as guidance for those who work in the schools. Understandably, this writing has been largely atheoretical; being directed at school people who want to know 'how to,' it has had to be 'Practical' (cited in Pinar et al. 1995:212).

The traditional view of curriculum is characterized by technological rationality and an effectiveness orientation (Englund 1986:41-42).

Pinar went on to describe two non-traditional groups. He termed one of them "conceptual-empiricists," and described them as "steeped in the theory and practice of present-day social science." This group "investigates 'phenomena' empirically, with an eye to the goal of prediction and control of behavior" (cited in Pinar et al. 1995:212).

The other group was termed reconceptualist by Pinar, and he defined their work as the following:

The function of this work would appear to be understanding, and this understanding is of the sort aimed at and sometimes achieved in the humanities. The humanities fields that have been influential thus far are history, philosophy, and literary criticism. Here the dominant modes of inquiry for this group have been historical, philosophical, and literary (cited in Pinar et al. 1995:213).

A common characteristic of the reconceptualist movement is "rejecting the relatively ahistorical, apolitical, and technological approach." More recently the

term reconceptualism has come to be used "to refer to critical curriculum or indeed critical research into instruction generally" (Englund 1986:40).

Although there are many different approaches to curriculum, the reconceptualist movement identifies two relatively distinct ones. According to Englund (1986:40), one is existentialist in character, and lead by Pinar who stated, "[W]e must shift our attention from the technical and the rational, and dwell on the notion of emancipation" (cited in Pinar et al. 1995:231). The other is more structural in emphasis, in which Apple is one of the contributors (Englund 1986:40). In the larger context of the reconceptualization of curriculum, in Canada, Max van Manen "launched the phenomenological movement and nearly singlehandedly established it as a major ... contemporary discourse" (Pinar et al. 1995:44).

ISSUES OF CURRICULUM

In the traditional definition, curriculum was regarded as a list of sequenced concepts of a subject. However, the contemporary analysis of curriculum regards it as more encompassing and complex than the traditional definition. In the contemporary definition, curriculum includes educational policy, values, and institutional structures as well as content.

As a provincial school district, School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) has to follow the prescribed provincial curriculum. Several interviewees pointed out this situation as the reason why they did not think that the Nisga'a had full control of education. Many Aboriginal bands which have only band-operated elementary schools employ the provincial core curriculum. For these band-operated schools, the provincial curriculum is not mandatory. However, considering the fact that the graduates of these band-operated schools enter into

provincial secondary schools, these schools cannot avoid using the provincial curriculum (Heather Harris, a professor in First Nations Studies of UNBC, pers. comm. April 12, 1996). In addition, many teaching materials are employed from mainstream society, and the teachers working in Aboriginal schools are trained and certified by mainstream institutions.

School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), like any other school districts in the province of British Columbia, is allowed to develop local curricula. Section 103 of the current School Act gives the school board an authority to "develop and offer local programmes for use in schools in the school district." In fact, the Nisga'a have provided Nisga'a students in the Nass Valley with the Nisga'a language and culture courses since prior to the establishment of the school district. According to Harry Nyce Jr., the Nisga'a language was taught to students on a regular basis at the Indian Day School in New Aiyansh (Nov. 27, 1995: Tape No. 20).

However, compared to the provincial curriculum, the ratio of locally developed curriculum is quite low. Any school district in British Columbia is allowed to locally develop only two out of their ten electives. The other eight are provincially prescribed, and are less relevant for the Nisga'a.

The provincial school curriculum has not been culturally sensitive and appropriate for Aboriginal people's needs. Apple, in his several books, repeatedly poses questions about school curricula such as "'Whose culture?,' 'What social group's knowledge?,' and 'In whose interest is certain knowledge (facts, skills, and propensities and dispositions) taught in cultural institutions like schools?'" (1990:16). In the following section I will focus on Apple's argument about curriculum to clarify the problem with the mainstream education.

APPLE'S ARGUMENT

Michael W. Apple has criticized the position stating that school curriculum is neutral knowledge and texts are delivery systems of facts. "We assume that our activity is neutral, that by not taking a political stance we are being objective" (Apple 1990:8). However, "we must always think the political whenever we think the educational" (Apple 1994:350). Political and educational concepts are part of a larger context which is changing all the time and is subject to ideological conflicts. "Education itself is an arena in which these ideological conflicts works themselves out" (Apple 1993a:17).

According to Apple, there is clear evidence of economic outcomes which shows that the institution of schooling is not neutral. He gives two reasons for this argument. The first reason is that although it should not be denied that schools serve many individuals' interests, they also act as filters to contribute to "the economic and cultural reproduction of class relations in a stratified society" (Apple 1990:8). The second reason is that "the knowledge that now gets into schools is already a choice from a much larger universe of possible social knowledge and principles" (Apple 1990:8). The knowledge that is taught in schools is cultural capital of the body that selected it. The following sections will focus on each of these points.

Schools as Filters

This section focuses on Apple's argument on schools as a filtering device. Apple thinks that school education is a method of reproduction and preservation of the inequality among people. He argues that the knowledge which is employed in schools works as a filtering device to reproduce a hierarchical society (Apple 1990:32).

In his discussion of power and culture, Apple describes an unequal distribution of knowledge. He argues that one tacit function of schooling is "the teaching of different dispositions and values to different school populations" (Apple 1990:65). Schools are organized differently for students who are prospective members of a middle class and those who will become semi-skilled and unskilled workers. The former are given "flexibility, choice, inquiry, etc.," while the latter experience stressed "punctuality, neatness, habit formation, and so on" (Apple 1990:65).

In the twentieth century in Canada, "[g]reater inequality in access to knowledge was introduced as students were streamed according to their vocational destinations" (Gaskel 1987:259). Frideres (1987:286) states, "[W]e have developed a two-stream educational system – an academic and vocational stream – Indians are allowed to stay in the system as long as they remain in the vocational stream." He continues to state, "Native people find themselves in a position in which they need an education to improve their position but their lower position in society militates against them doing well in school" (1987:286).

The Nisga'a have experienced this unequal distribution of knowledge in the past. In Chapter Two, this thesis depicted the Nisga'a experience in the DIA schools in the Nass Valley and in residential schools. In the DIA schools, the Nisga'a were forced to use discarded textbooks from mainstream society and poor teaching materials. In some residential schools, people had only half-day academic classes. In both kinds of schools, especially in the DIA schools, the Nisga'a had teachers of poorer quality. The Nisga'a were likely to be treated as second or third class people.

McKay and McKay (1987:67) describe the Nisga'a experience in residential schools: "Once age fourteen was reached, half of the school day was spent on practical education (farm, bakery, laundry, general housekeeping chores,

carpentry shop, sewing classes, kitchen and scullery duties, and so forth)." This description indicates that Aboriginal people were educated to be labour workers, and sometimes to be house servants and house maids in the dominant society. As described in Chapter Two, once the number of European immigrants increased and Aboriginal people were no longer needed in the labour force in the 1920s, Aboriginal people's education was ignored.

However, it has to be clarified that the term "knowledge" used above by Apple is the knowledge given in institutional settings. The Nisga'a have their own knowledge, but it is a radically different one from what is given in schools. The Nisga'a knowledge is living knowledge which has emerged within their culture. While the Nisga'a have their own knowledge, they experienced the unequal distribution of institutional knowledge. However, the Nisga'a think that they have to have the same institutional knowledge to be competitive in the dominant society, to be part of the larger society, and to survive in this modern world. The experience of unequal distribution of knowledge seems to be one reason why the Nisga'a have pursued the knowledge which the mainstream people have by joining the provincial school system. This Nisga'a pursuit does not mean that the Nisga'a are eager to give up their cultural knowledge and take the institutional knowledge instead. On the contrary, the Nisga'a think that they have to preserve Nisga'a values, and that, at the same time, they should not be marginalized in the larger modern society.

Language in School Education

In addition to the unequal distribution of knowledge, language in school education is another aspect which has to be examined. Anne Lindsay (1992:205) discusses how children come to school with different sociocultural backgrounds and different forms of language usage. She states, "Schools are usually seen as

predominantly middle class mainstream institutions, and in Heath's work children from middle class mainstream backgrounds were the best prepared for school success" (1992:205). Reviewing the earlier studies in the effects of sociolinguistic background of the child, Lindsay explains two different kinds of narrative structures used by children in school activities, topic-associating and topic-centred styles (1992:205). In the earlier studies, the topic-centered style was associated with the middle class Euro-North American culture, and the topic-associating style with children of African-American origin. Use of the topic-centred style was associated with positive evaluations of children in schools while use of the latter was associated with negative evaluations (Lindsay 1992:207).

From her sociolinguistic study in a group of Aboriginal children, Lindsay concludes that the majority of these children used a different style from the topic-centred or the topic associating structures. She notes that it was a "third and different style" (1992:207). The problem lying in this language of schooling is that the existing mismatch between Aboriginal student's narrative style and the mainstream model of narrative style expected by the school may give Aboriginal students a negative evaluation and unequal access to literacy learning (Lindsay 1992:208). When one considers the educational context in which many Aboriginal people have been placed, it becomes apparent that the institutional practices were intentionally or unintentionally bound to keep Aboriginal people in the lower or lowest part of the social hierarchy.

Curriculum as Selected Knowledge

This section focuses on Apple's argument that the school curriculum is already a choice from somewhere. "The curricula is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a

nation. It is always part of a *selective tradition*, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge" (Apple 1993b:222). Apple cites John Fiske who stated, "Knowledge is never neutral, it never exists in an empiricist, objective relationship to the real. Knowledge is power, and the circulation of knowledge is part of the social distribution of power" (1993a:45). Knowledge often comes from the perspectives of the most powerful class in the society (Apple 1990:8). "The curriculum in schools responds to and represents ideological and cultural resources that come from somewhere. Not all groups' visions are represented and not all groups' meanings are responded to" (Apple 1990:46). Apple termed the knowledge which came from the most powerful class "official knowledge."

In terms of official knowledge in the curriculum, Apple also states, "[S]chools also play a rather large part in distributing the kinds of normative and dispositional elements required to make this inequality seem natural" (1990:43). He continues to state that schools teach a hidden curriculum that maintains the most powerful class's ideological hegemony. For example, to do so, it is necessary to inform students that their society is a peaceful one with little or no conflict. It is "the very *absence* of conflict in social studies and science curricula that [is] the most powerful ideological statement in curricula" about the nature of the society (Apple 1994:363). Imagine how the Nisga'a students feel when they are taught that Canada is a peaceful country with little or no struggle among various races, while the students have seen their kin fighting against the government over their land questions for more than one century.

Society obviously is not as peaceful as it is made out to be. On the contrary, Apple (1991:2) argues that legitimate knowledge should be the result of complex struggles among different class, race, gender, and religious groups. According to him, there are three different kinds of responses to a text given his

notion of the legitimacy of knowledge. These are a dominant, a negotiated, or an oppositional response. Apple continues:

In the dominant reading of a text, one accepts the messages at face value. In a negotiated response, the reader may dispute a particular claim, but accept the overall tendencies or interpretations of a text. Finally, an oppositional response rejects these dominant tendencies and interpretations. The reader "repositions" herself or himself in relation to the text and takes on the position of the oppressed (1993a:61).

He states that many responses will be a combination of these three. The point of this argument is, he states, that because students are not "empty vessels in which knowledge is poured," they "*construct* their own responses to texts ... based on their own class, race, gender and religious experiences" (1993a:61).

What Apple describes is the Nisga'a experience in the provincial school system. The provincially prescribed curriculum is not sensitive or culturally appropriate for Aboriginal people. Regarding this curriculum issue, Deanna Nyce stated:

[S]cience is a good area to look at ... because science exists in the Nisga'a ... world [W]hen ... you get a fish and ... prepare your fish, there is ... science, there's ... physics involved in raising a totem pole ... there is economic[s] involved in [the] feast system ... but [the provincial curriculum] shuts out so many [Aboriginal] students, because the students cannot relate that curriculum to their every-day experience (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15 and 16).

She also stated:

[T]here has never been an appropriate ... articulation of it [the Nisga'a culture] [Y]ou must use the curriculum, you must use their [non-Aboriginal] standards ... that means their exams ... Again, [the] same problem comes into effect here ... because the curriculum has never been culturally appropriate, the exam is not culturally appropriate [T]his is the provincial scene, and I think that this is still part of colonization [T]hey ... shout, "[U]se my curriculum, ... use my exams, ... use my accreditation" (Dec. 11, 1995: Tape No. 17).

She concluded that until there is a fundamental change in the curriculum structure, Aboriginal people in the public school system will continue to have difficulty (Dec. 11, 1995: Tape No. 17).

Kathleen Clayton gave an example of the culturally irrelevant curriculum:

We have big land ... here that we are talking about. Do our kids really know anything about it? [T]hat can be introduced into the curriculum. A part of our land, exactly where [we] are at, the different areas, mountains, what they call it in Nisga'a ... around here. We learned about Italy, France all that. It doesn't even apply to us ... some of us will never even get there (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2).

Dennis Nyce also mentioned the problem of culturally inappropriate curriculum. He stated, "[I]n history, does it say, when Captain George Vancouver pulled into what is known as Vancouver Island and Vancouver today ... he was lost? [The history book] doesn't say that ... the white people do not want to admit ... that he didn't find the land and he was lost!" (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 18). In other words, as Apple stated, "It has become increasingly evident that the formal corpus of school knowledge found in, say, most history books and social studies texts and materials has, over the years, presented a somewhat biased view of the true nature" (1990:85).

Culturally inappropriate curriculum has been said to be one of the reasons for Aboriginal students' high drop-out rate and lower levels of achievement. At the annual education convention in 1995, Bert McKay pointed out that Nisga'a students had low achievement in several subjects (Oct. 17, 1995). There may be many reasons for this. Although the present study did not specifically seek an explanation for the Nisga'a students' lower achievement level, the interviews conducted for this study strongly suggest part of the cause lies with the fact that the provincial curriculum and examinations are not

culturally appropriate for the Nisga'a. It certainly should not be said that Nisga'a students are simply not competitive enough to do well.

As examined above, Apple argues that the curriculum employed in schools is a result of a selection by the most powerful class of a society. The curriculum teaches a hidden curriculum to perpetuate the ideological hegemony of the class. However, since students are not empty vessels into which official knowledge is poured, their response to the curriculum may be acceptance, negotiation, or opposition according to their class, race, gender, religious values, etc.

When Nisga'a students encountered the provincial curriculum, their opposition to it was a natural attitude. As Deanna Nyce, Kathleen Clayton, and Dennis Nyce indicated, the provincial curriculum is assumed to be one of the causes of Nisga'a students' drop-out. Dropping out from schools is seen as one form of opposition.

Of course, there can be other practical reasons as well. For example, when I had a conversation with a young woman, she stated that she had dropped out of the NESS because she had been pregnant. Although she wanted to go back to school to finish grade 12 later, she did not have the opportunity. Since there are many very young parents in the valley, pregnancy may be one of the causes of drop-out for female students. However, since I did not systematically interview people who dropped out of school, I cannot conclude what caused and still causes Nisga'a students to drop out.

Whatever the cause of Nisga'a students' drop-out is, however, a fundamental change is necessary. Apple suggests a possible direction. He states, "One of the places that journey of hope continues is in the real lives and experiences of those politically active teachers, parents, and students who are now struggling in such uncertain conditions to construct an education worthy of

its name" (1993a:43). In other words, Apple might argue that curriculum development should be dialectical between the Nisga'a and the province, and that Nisga'a negotiated and oppositional responses to the provincial curriculum would contribute to develop more culturally sensitive curriculum for Nisga'a students.

In terms of the fundamental change in curriculum, there may be other possible ways as well. In the following section, I will focus on Max van Manen's theory.

MAX VAN MANEN AND PEDAGOGY

As cited several times in the earlier chapters, Nisga'a traditional education values have much to share with Max van Manen. Being Dutch, van Manen claims that he has a different notion of pedagogy from typical North American educators. Van Manen defines pedagogy as "the activity of teaching, parenting, educating, or generally living with children, that requires constant practical acting in concrete situations and relations" (1990:2).

To develop a deeper understanding of pedagogy and pedagogical relations, he uses the term *mensenkennis* from his native Dutch language. Noting that this term is not easily translated into English, he explains that *mensen-kennis* literally means "people-knowledge, to have a perspective understanding of people" (1994:137). Van Manen asks, "Who possesses this special knowledge?" He then points out the famous Russian author Dostoevski and his novels, and states, "[T]hey probe the human soul so deeply and with so much understanding" (1994:137). However, *mensenkennis* "is not limited to such great examples. An especially thoughtful friend, some wise aunt, or an old grandmother may be respected as people with *mensenkennis*" (1994:137).

As *mensenkennis* means to understand people, pedagogy means to understand children, "but in a somewhat different way from ... North American usage of the term (van Manen 1994:139). Van Manen continues, "To have a sense of pedagogy implies that one is capable of insights into the child's being or character" (1994:139).

Van Manen states that the pedagogical relationship is characterized as a personal one. In this relationship, adults not only care for a child as he or she is, but also care for what he or she may become (1994:143). In pedagogical relationship, the most important question is "How does the child experience this particular situation, relationship, or event?" (van Manen 1991:11). Adults must be able to "interpret and understand the present situation and experiences of the child" (van Manen 1994:143). Van Manen repeatedly emphasizes the significance for pedagogy of interpreting children in their lived experience. He cites Nohl who stated that "for the student the pedagogical relation with the educator is more than a means to an end (to become educated or grown-up); the relation is a life experience that has significance in and of itself" (van Manen 1994:143).

Van Manen then focuses on the contemporary challenging pedagogical environment depicted by educational critics:

They have argued that pressures from peers, the commerce industry, and the media have seriously displaced the influence spheres of parents, teachers, the extended family, and the neighborhood. Values have evolved (or devolved) so much in the last few decades that parents and teachers can no longer rely on the same pedagogical norms that have traditionally guided the education of children of earlier generations ... there is less advice from grandparents to parents. Young parents tend to rely perhaps more on self-help books, on community parenting programmes, or on the myriad messages received through television and other media (1994:147).

To respond to the critics, van Manen states that in spite of different kinds of objections and critiques, pedagogical relations sustain vitality, and that although

there is "increasing technological rationalization of educational life in schools and other educational systems," pedagogical relations still exist (van Manen 1994:149).

When one considers van Manen's discussion, the Nisga'a traditional education and their cultural setting must be highly valuable. Regarding the importance of education, Art Tindill stated, "Every society has always found out, sooner or later, the key for the future is education" (Oct. 24, 1995: Tape No. 25). This is why education has been discussed in the history of human beings all the time. Considering what has been discussed under the reconceptualization opposing to curriculum, the Nisga'a traditional education philosophy has a major contribution to make to pedagogy generally. I will further examine the Nisga'a contribution in the next chapter.

As described previously, the reconceptualist movement has sought a fundamental change in curriculum towards a more humanistic model of education. Solutions to educational problems have too often been in superficial terms thus making likely the same problems will occur in the future. The reconceptualist movement provides the grounds for articulation of the complex differences between Western and Nisga'a approaches to education, which may be crucial to understanding how true Nisga'a control of education and ultimately decolonization can be developed.

SEEKING FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES

In the earlier section, I cited Deanna Nyce who had stated that until there was a fundamental change in the curriculum structure, Aboriginal students would continue to have difficulties. As some readers may know, Japanese schools, both junior and senior secondary schools, were very devastated about

two decades ago. Many school buildings were damaged and teachers were beaten up by students. Generally speaking, the Japanese are not aggressive people at all. Rather, as well known by their hard working nature, they are quite patient and strongly loyal to where they belong. Yet in such a society, students' violent resistance was a major issue for years. However, without seeing any major fundamental change, the resistance has gone.

However, although the students' resistance seems to have gone, until there is any fundamental change, the school will not be safe. As cited from Michael W. Apple earlier, students respond to the curriculum in three different ways. One of them is an oppositional response. Unless there is a fundamental change in the curriculum, the oppositional response will repeatedly occur, and such a response will be non-constructive as was the case in Japan. My major question, then, is "What will the fundamental changes be?"

As I write this thesis, I find that many questions emerge. It does not mean that people's explanations were unclear. Rather I would like to say that to contribute constructively to a more humanistic future, we have to ask questions of each other. There are questions which I would ask the Nisga'a. I am not capable of offering specific solutions to the questions regarding Nisga'a education.

In reference to the reality in Aboriginal school education, Eber Hampton critically states,

[E]ven with Native control, most of the structures, methods, content, and faculty remain predominantly non-Native. A century or more of cultural conflict, non-Native-oriented schools, and non-Native-trained Native educators has left major obstacles in the way of Native-controlled schools. Native languages have declined, non-Native standards are usually used to evaluate Native schools and Native teachers, the development of Native curricula and Native educational methods is an enormous task, and funding is uncertain and usually controlled by non-Natives (1995:10).

This critique presented by Hampton also describes the Nisga'a situation. I would like to pose questions looking at the two areas: schools as filters and curriculum as selected knowledge.

Schools as Filters – Questions About Being Educated

In the interview question of "What is Indian control of Indian education for you?" several interviewees responded that it would be to have all Nisga'a teachers at the school. The reasons were already shown in the earlier chapters. Another response was that the Nisga'a had to train more Nisga'a teachers to get full control. In many places, people said that the Nisga'a needed "well-educated" people to govern themselves when self-government is realized.

My questions are, "If all the teachers are Nisga'a, will everything be excellent?" "What does 'train Nisga'a teachers' mean?" and "What is the definition of a well-educated person?" It is not difficult to imagine that Nisga'a teachers will bring many positive effects to students and parents in the community-oriented society where teachers are also its members. However, when one takes a closer look at who awards Nisga'a teachers the teacher certification, it is the non-Aboriginal institution with its "hidden curriculum."

If "well-educated" people refers to those who have university degrees, the fact must not be overlooked that the university is a non-Aboriginal-oriented institution, where Nisga'a students are taught and evaluated according to non-Aboriginal values. Also the holders of profound knowledge, the carvers, etc. are excluded.

Then, when people say, "We have to train more Nisga'a teachers," how will the Nisga'a train teachers? Do the Nisga'a simply send whoever wants to be a teacher to the university so that the person can get the teaching skills? In this case, when and where can the aspiring teacher learn the Nisga'a value of

teaching, which was described by Bert McKay as "a gift" ? Or does the Nisga'a adult seek qualities of a good educator in the child when he or she is still very young, train the child to be an excellent pedagogue, and send the child to the university when the time comes?

Curriculum as Selected Knowledge – Questions About Culture and Language Education

As described in Chapter Four, many people wish for an integration of the Nisga'a traditional culture and school education. Some said skills in traditional cultural practices have to be recognized in the school system, and another said that the school has to bring the elders to the classroom. Students have to learn how to make half-smoked salmon instead of making pizzas. A teacher asserted that it is important to incorporate Nisga'a traditions with every subject. These are all very reasonable assertions.

However, my questions are "In which way should children have to learn the traditional culture?" and "What will the fundamental change in culture education be?" If the integration of the Nisga'a traditional culture and school education means bringing the elders into the classroom, and making half-smoked salmon instead of pizzas, they perhaps can be started tomorrow. Here is another question: "Is it the Nisga'a tradition that the elders come into a room to teach something to the children gathered there?"

As stated in Chapter Four, I believe that traditional culture cannot be taught in a classroom, because it is in people's lives. Also as I repeatedly cited from Randy Fred, the thrust has to be "Education into Culture, not Culture into Education." If my thought is right, why do the elders have to come into the classroom? Why do the students not go to the elders? Where should the students learn how to make half-smoked salmon, in the classroom or beside a smoke house?

Another aspect that can be examined is the Nisga'a traditional oral stories which are translated into English. Nobody would disagree with the fact that translation tends to reduce original meanings and that a part of the cultural expression is lost in translation. In an interview, Laura Welde stated, "[Y]ou ... tell them about the story, and it's very funny, they are laughing, and when you translate it ... it'll lose the ... comical part of the story or funny part of the story" (Nov. 21, 1995: Tape No. 27). The cultural violence brought by colonization has to be considered carefully. For example, it is a common phenomenon for Japanese students to learn English literature at school through Japanese translations. However, the existing situation of the Nass Valley is that Nisga'a students are learning their own oral stories in English translations.

In addition to the issue of translation, the crucial aspect lying between the oral narrative and the written literature has to be carefully examined. Anne Lindsay keenly states, "[L]egends published as picture books and written in conventional story structure may violate the original narrative style as well as the narrative context." She also cites Tafoya, an Aboriginal educator, who stated, "Native programs tend to be badly sung imitations of European models" (1992:208).

More questions can be asked about the language education. In the current situation of the Nisga'a, language education at the school is necessary. However, as Bert McKay stated, language is an indispensable part of a culture. A language is part of people's lives. Needless to say, what colonization brought to the Nisga'a culture and the reason why the Nisga'a language does not prevail in people's lives should be well understood. However, I still pose questions of "Is it enough to teach children the Nisga'a language at the school?" and "Is there not any alternative for the language education?"

Rethinking of the Institution

As described by Hampton above, the institutionalized education system has brought many unresolved problems in Aboriginal people's education. It can be said that this institutionalization of education system derives from a deep structure of an unequal society. As Hampton states, most of the elements of school education in Aboriginal-controlled schools are controlled by non-Aboriginal values. The curriculum especially is not only non-Aboriginal, but also has a role to internalize the existing inequality through its hidden curriculum. As Apple discussed, the official knowledge in the curriculum was a result of a selection by the most powerful class in a society.

Considering this fact, it may not be so radical to state that as long as the Nisga'a have to use the current provincial curriculum, the real emancipation from the colonial education will be very difficult. However, it does not mean that the process of Nisga'a decolonization through education is forever impossible. As Apple stated, curriculum is a result of the constant struggle among different class, race, gender, and religious groups. As he also stated, politically aware teachers, parents, and students are capable of changing the current situation.

At the same time, rethinking of the institutional education may be one step towards a more humanistic education not only for the Nisga'a, but also for everybody else. I do not mean that the Nisga'a should not have any school, or they had better go back to the education system which they had in the pre-contact era. As many Nisga'a stated, the Nisga'a have endeavored to be part of the larger society. In the land questions, what the Nisga'a have pursued is not to "secede as a separate state." On the contrary, it is to work with the government and resource industries, but the Nisga'a "will make the important decisions" (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993:9). The fact that the Nisga'a joined the provincial

school system indicates that the Nisga'a want to be part of Canada in education as well.

Nonetheless, Aboriginal people's traditional teaching patterns, which are not institutionalized, have to be carefully reviewed. Jo-ann Archibald cites the *Sto:lo Sitel Curriculum Development Guide* which states:

Education must encompass our traditional patterns of teaching and learning in which children learn best by doing and experiencing, as opposed to using only written materials. These patterns encompass:

- * independence
- * self-reliance
- * observation
- * discovery
- * practical experience
- * respect for nature (1995:303).

Eber Hampton cites one example of the difference of learning style between Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students. The person states:

I understand constructive criticism and not [sic] constructive criticism. But, it's just that one of the things they teach [in non-Aboriginal universities] is that critical thinking. It has its advantages. But, the Indian child when he sits, he listens to his grandparents or his parents. He's not going to criticize what they say. And he is listening, taking, trying to do what they say ... respectfully (cited in Hampton 1995:24-25).

Madeleine MacIvor cites Hampton who stated, "Indian cultures have ways of thought, learning, teaching, and communicating that are different than but of equal validity to those of White cultures. These thoughtways stand at the beginning of Indian time and are the foundations of our children's lives" (1995 78).

In reference to science teaching, MacIvor states that science curriculum has to incorporate culturally appropriate teaching methodology. As cited from her in Chapter Four, what she means is not mere employment of exemplars from

their culture or daily lives. To use exemplars from Aboriginal tradition to explain conventional science is not a fundamental change in science education. It may be able to be started tomorrow.

Instead, MacIvor suggests, "[T]here is no reason why the classroom must be contained within the school structure. By expanding the walls of the school into the community, the 'Indian sense of place' is greatly expanded, as is the involvement of the community in the students' science education" (1995:89). The idea for the fundamental change is advocated by a keen statement by Deloria who stated, "[T]here is no excuse for avoiding [Aboriginal] traditional ways of teaching in favor of non-Indian techniques which have proven themselves failures" (cited in MacIvor 1995:79).

To clearly depict the difference between non-Aboriginal institutionalized knowledge and Aboriginal holistic knowledge, citing David Suzuki's experience here will be helpful. He describes his experience of visiting the World Wildlife Fund research station near Manaus in the Amazon rain forest. He states:

Three scientists, frog experts, were there at the time, and their knowledge of their subject was impressive But when I asked about a bird ... and a strange plant on a tree, he shrugged his shoulders, "Don't ask me, I'm a herpetologist," he said. Yet whenever I asked Kayapo Indians ... about an insect, plant, or bird, they always knew it by name and could relate an anecdote about it. Scientific expertise is so narrowly focused and specialized that it can barely comprehend the dimensions and the interconnectedness of life (Knudtson and Suzuki 1992:xxix).

Thus, the institutionalized knowledge has been a subject of criticism among many people. Especially in science, the lack of holistic knowledge has been leading human beings to a crisis of survival.

Regarding the holistic knowledge about nature, or the knowledge of interconnectedness of living beings, Dennis Nyce stated:

White people didn't care how many animals they killed ... but our chiefs knew their area [W]hen the chief's seen that ... his people had maybe overfish[ed] the creek, [he] said "[W]e must let this stream replenish." [S]o, they never fished there ... until that stream regenerated itself [W]e knew that if we hunt to extinction all the beavers what's gonna happen to the pond ... what's gonna happen to the creatures that dwell[ed] within that beaver pond (Dec. 7, 1995: Tape No. 18).

This kind of knowledge, which is different from the institutionalized knowledge, can be passed on to the next generation through the Nisga'a teaching pattern. The Nisga'a traditional teaching pattern can be brought into the school education by expanding the school wall into the community. This total integration of the school and the community also has to be spread into the non-Aboriginal society.

In the current situation, the Nisga'a tend to divide education into formal and informal forms. Some interviewees stated that children could learn both in the school and the community, or while children were learning in the school, they also could learn the culture. However, this very dichotomy seems to be one of the conceptual obstacles which keeps the Nisga'a from totally integrating the Nisga'a traditional culture and school education. Or, because there is no total integration of the Nisga'a traditional teaching and school education, there is the dichotomy.

As cited from Hampton above, Aboriginal traditional ways of education are radically different from non-Aboriginal ways, but equally valuable. As Deloria stated above, non-Aboriginal education has proved to be a failure in many ways. It can be said that the failure of non-Aboriginal education is condensed in institutionalized knowledge. Considering this fact, what Deloria stated is true. There is no excuse for avoiding Aboriginal traditional ways of teaching and learning which were not held in institutionalized settings.

Rethinking the institutionalization of education may be one of the ways which can bring fundamental changes in education.

However, it has to be emphasized that rethinking institutional education does not mean going back to the past. To survive as a nation in the modern world, as many interviewees stated, the Nisga'a have to have the knowledge taught in the school. Hence, I do not intend to state that being in the school district is negative. Rather, I would like to state that the Nisga'a knowledge existing in their lives such as science in the fish preparation, physics in totem pole raising, and so forth, has to be increasingly brought into the student's learning in place of the current provincial curriculum. At the same time, I would like to strongly state that the powerful Nisga'a traditional educational philosophy, which knows no notion of failure and is practical learning grounded in watchfulness, has to prevail in Nisga'a education. There is no reason to avoid the Nisga'a traditional teaching and learning in their very unique school setting where the schools are in their cultural ground. I would like to state that rethinking the institutionalization of education means expanding the school wall into the community, which is one of the possible ways to realize "education into culture."

CHAPTER SIX : NISGA'A CONTRIBUTION TO PEDAGOGY

Although my stay in the valley was relatively short, as I write this thesis, I am convinced that the Nisga'a have a great contribution to make to the world where people have also been struggling to seek a better education for their children's well-being. The Nisga'a story is already a success story.

PEDAGOGICAL MOMENTS

Max van Manen often gives the reader concrete pedagogical moments. For example, he describes, "Sundra has completed her work and she hands it with visible pride to her teacher" (van Manen 1991:38). He asserts that in such a situation "an action is required even if that action may be non-action. That active encounter is the pedagogical moment. In other words, a pedagogical moment is the site of everyday pedagogical action, everyday pedagogical practice" (1991:40).

During my stay in the Nass Valley, there were innumerable pedagogical encounters where I learned much about a people living in a different culture. Sometimes, I learned about the Nisga'a learning and teaching style from short conversations with people. In the following section, I would like to describe some pedagogical moments, and what I learned from simple incidents that took place in the daily life.

* On a cloudy day, I was talking with Harry Nyce, the Resources Negotiator for the Nisga'a Tribal Council. He said that the rain would come within three or four days. Since the sky was so dark I thought that it would start raining within three or four minutes, and that I misheard him. Surprisingly enough, it started raining three days later. I saw fisherman's knowledge lying in his senses.

- * I saw a chief crying at the totem pole raising in Gitwinksihlkw. I tried to imagine how nice it must be to see his culture being revived.
- * At the totem pole raising feast, I was sitting at a place where I should not. I did not know that the place was for people in Eagle Clan. At that time, Joseph Gosnell, the president of the Nisga'a Tribal Council, was sitting beside me. When I found that I was sitting where I should not, I asked him if there was any place for an outsider. He told me that I could sit there. I saw Nisga'a generosity to a person from a different culture.
- * When Shirley Morven told me, "[G]o ahead and cry ... I do that all the time," I started thinking about how often the Nisga'a have cried for what happened in the past.
- * One day, a little boy Randall told me, "Hey, you are Mrs. Gosnell's guest! I'm picking up white stones. You can take one." He remembered that one day I had visited Mrs. Gosnell's class where he had been learning the language. I got one stone from him, and saw the Nisga'a tradition of sharing in the little boy.
- * I told Frank Tait, a Nisga'a fisherman, that I had not seen sockeye. He told me that if he could fish some he would bring one for me. That night, he brought me a big sockeye (actually it was not only for me, but also for the people staying at Lorene's Bed and Breakfast). The Nisga'a way of teaching is extremely demonstrative. They prefer to show exactly what a thing is.
- * One day, Frank Tait and his friends took me fishing with them. Their net was broken, and they spent hours fixing it. As a result, they could not get anything. I saw the patience of the people in dealing with nature.
- * One day, Irene Griffin brought me some fried seaweed. She told me that she wanted to show me what fried seaweed was.
- * One day, I showed some grade 5 and 6 girls how to roll Sushi (Japanese food) for the preparation of an International Food Festival at the NESS. I showed it

only one time, and they learned very quickly. The Nisga'a people have very powerful observation skills. Even among the Japanese, many people cannot roll it properly.

* I saw many little children run to grandparents to be hugged. The security of being close to grandparents is what the modern Japanese society is losing.

* One time, three people working on the Ayuukhl Nisga'a Committee stayed at Lorene's Bed and Breakfast for one night. They were not very old people, and I supposed they were in their 50s and 60s. They spoke only in Nisga'a for hours. I saw the past and the future of the Nisga'a Nation at the same time.

* One morning, on my way to the NESS, a little boy followed me. He started to introduce himself, his family, and his cousins. When he introduced these people, he told me to which clan each of them belonged. I learned how important the clan system was for the Nisga'a. Even a little child knew who was in which clan, which indicates a sophisticated categorizing technique.

* One night, we were watching a news programme about the Nisga'a land questions. Lorene Plante said that watching it made her emotional, because many people had already gone during the long pursuit of the land questions. The more than one-century pursuit indicated an incredible amount of patience of the Nisga'a Nation.

There were also many other pedagogical moments which I do not describe here. From some incidents, I learned that the Nisga'a traditional way of teaching children, which is a practical way, is still strongly alive in people's lives. Also, there is the Nisga'a educational philosophy which says that every person has a contribution to make to the Nisga'a Nation. As cited from Percy Tait and Dennis Nyce in Chapter One, the Nisga'a have not educated all the children to be the same, because every child has a special quality and unique talents. This Nisga'a tradition has to be introduced and known in the world

where people are seeking a better way of education. In the following sections, I will discuss the contribution which the Nisga'a can make.

NISGA'A EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND PEDAGOGY

As described earlier, the Nisga'a traditional educational philosophy is that learning is a way of life, and that it starts at a person's birth and ends at the person's death. In this philosophy, since a person is in progress throughout his or her life, there is no term for failure as there is in the English language. Until a person dies, there is no end of learning in the Nisga'a philosophy. Also, as described in the earlier chapters, the Nisga'a traditional teaching has been full of watchfulness and thoughtfulness. The adults carefully observe the child to see the best in the child, and place the child with a person who can enhance the quality and talent that the child is portraying.

Several interview responses indicate that this Nisga'a traditional educational philosophy is still alive in the community today. As cited in Chapter Four, Deanna Nyce thinks that identifying the gift that a child is portraying, and fostering it are forms of Indian control of Indian education (Nov. 2, 1995: Tape No. 15 and 16). In an interview, Marilyn Tait said that she expected her sons to go as far as they could with their given talents, and that each of the sons had a different talent (Nov. 15, 1995: Tape No. 23). Lorene Plante stated that it was important for her children to be comfortable whatever they were doing, and that although parents could suggest and guide children to get their goals, parents should not tell children what to do (Oct. 30, 1995: Tape No. 21). For the Nisga'a, identifying the child's talent and enhancing it is still very important.

The Nisga'a learning and teaching philosophy is one of the things that the reconceptualist movement has sought. One of the assertions of the movement is

to recognize or value individual biography. The watchfulness and thoughtfulness that the Nisga'a tradition portrays are indispensable to seeing such individual biography. Pedagogical relations, as van Manen stated, are personal phenomenon. In those relationships, the adult not only sees a child as he or she is, but also sees what the child may become. This is what the Nisga'a traditional way of teaching children stresses. Dennis Nyce's father saw a talent that Dennis was portraying in the Nisga'a art work, and thought that Dennis would become a totem pole carver. Then the father placed Dennis in the guidance of a master carver to enhance the given gift that Dennis had. It should be said that the father was a man of wisdom.

In the Nisga'a Nation, practical learning through careful observation and listening is a valuable way of learning. As Dennis Nyce stated, the hands on experience is the best teaching method that the Nisga'a know. This, needless to say, does not mean to deny everything in conventional science or abstract knowledge. However, highly scientific and technology-centered education tends to lead learners away from a holistic view of the world. As described in Chapter Five, the reconceptualist movement is cautious of highly scientific and technological education in schools. However, currently this approach to education prevails in schools in many places. If the Nisga'a scientific world, where there is science in fish preparation and physics in totem pole raising, is more strongly focused on, it will be a model for other people struggling to flee from an abstract science and technology-oriented model of education.

In the Nisga'a Nation, like any other society, children's well-being has been one of the most important concerns. The extended-family-oriented and community-oriented society, as Alvin McKay stated, provides a strong support system for children's learning in their lives. In the community, there are many wise elders and grandparents, who are, as van Manen expressed, people with

mensenkennis. Today, "young people are coming back from the cities to consult with [the] elders and to learn from them" (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1993:2). From the elders, young people can learn the meaning of their lives as Nisga'a.

Not only in the communities, but also in the school, the Nisga'a have a unique situation. In the Nisga'a school, the relationship between the teacher and the child can be personal, which is the necessary relationship in pedagogy. Teachers, especially Nisga'a teachers, are able to know to which clan a student belongs, and who the student's parents and grandparents are. Furthermore, they may be able to even know why a student looks sleepy on a certain day, why he or she did not come to school, or why the child received a lower mark or higher mark than usual. As Robin Casey stated in the interview, in the NESS, teachers can take care of students' study closely.

The relationship between the teacher and the parents is also personal in the strongly community-oriented Nisga'a society where Nisga'a teachers are also community members. David Griffin stated:

I do [talk to parents often] more informally than formally, because I see them in the community. I'm involved in coaching ... two basketball teams in my community. [S]o, I see parents there to come up to watch their children practice. And I coach a volleyball team and a basketball team here this school. [S]o, I see parents often ... [Parents ask] about their son and daughter, and I speak more informally than formally, which is good (Nov. 17, 1995: Tape No. 4).

These personal relationships, however, are not what can exist exclusively among the Nisga'a people. Kathleen Clayton expected that the Local Education Agreement would give more authority to the Gitlakdamiks Band in order to hire non-Nisga'a teachers who are eager to understand the Nisga'a culture and its value. She stated:

We wanna have [a say] in [teacher hiring], too. We want to know exactly where their interest is ... just by asking ... question[s] to

whoever the applicant is, what is their interest in First Nations people, "[W]hat do you know about the Nisga'a people?" ... "[A]re you willing to take a Nisga'a cross-cultural workshop?" [Q]uestions like that, because sometimes we have people coming here that have absolutely no interest in us ... I mean it's not just happening in the school, it's happening within health and different areas (Nov. 28, 1995: Tape No. 1 and 2).

As Kathleen Clayton implied, not all the teachers who have teaching certification are necessarily good pedagogues. As described in Chapter Three, the quality of the teachers has improved since the establishment of the school district. However, whether or not a person is a wise pedagogue cannot be measured only by certification. The next step for the Nisga'a may be, as Kathleen Clayton indicated, to hire teachers who are capable of understanding and working with the existing Nisga'a educational values.

THE NISGA'A CONTRIBUTION TO PEDAGOGY

As discussed in Chapter Five and in this Chapter, not only the Nisga'a, but also many other people including the Japanese are struggling in education. However, even if most of them are looking for a similar goal, there are some things which some people can do, but other people cannot do. As a comparatively small nation, the Nisga'a Nation might have some disadvantages in several ways, but also have advantages which Japan, with its big population, does not have. The Nisga'a differ from other countries because of a variety of factors that includes population, culture, social structure, historical experience, etc. In spite of this, if the Nisga'a can be successful in decolonization through education, it will set a model from which other people can learn.

The Nisga'a advantage is that people can closely observe individual children both in the school and the community. The Nisga'a relationship

between the pedagogue and the child can be very personal where the pedagogue is able to carefully look at the uniqueness, special characteristics, needs, and situation of a child. This personal relationship is indispensable for the pedagogy which van Manen described above.

In modern educational systems, studies of children "fundamentally reduced 'beings-as-humans' into the biologically given 'beings-as-things'" (Aoki 1981:37). To describe the inhumanity in education, Ted T. Aoki, citing van Manen, states, "[H]ow we tend to make 'curriculum thinglike,' and how we distance ourselves from the essentials of pedagogic life" (1981:37). While the modern systematic institutional education tends to make the relationship between the educator and the student impersonal, the Nisga'a traditional educational philosophy and the unique setting of the school education allow the Nisga'a to realize this ideal of pedagogy. There are many things that many other people can learn from the Nisga'a experience.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I have depicted how the Nisga'a were colonized through the colonial educational system and how in recent years they have struggled for decolonization through their own educational system.

When Nisga'a students were sent to the residential schools, many of them were not allowed to speak their language. Later, young people were sent to attend provincial secondary schools and to board with non-Aboriginal families. Both kinds of schools caused Nisga'a students and parents to lose their parenting skills. As a result of the colonial education, colonization was internalized among the people. This internalized colonization still exists in the valley.

However, parental hardship combined with people's consciousness to have meaningful education for their children led the Nisga'a to establish their own school district in the Nass Valley in 1975. To establish their own schools in their quite isolated traditional cultural ground is a big advantage for the Nisga'a. People's views about the school district are generally very positive. Being able to keep the secondary students inside the valley was people's earnest wish. Besides learning in the schools, students can learn their culture in the community.

In 1993, the Nisga'a also established a post-secondary institution, the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (WWN). It provides university degree programmes as well as vocational and continuing community education, the Adult Basic Education programme, cross-cultural workshops, etc. At the WWN, many adults who did not have an opportunity to learn their language are learning it.

In terms of Indian control of Indian education, many Nisga'a think that it is the right of decision making. Also, identifying children's given gifts and leading children to meaningful lives are two ways to achieve Indian control of Indian education.

The Nisga'a have clear definitions of Indian control of Indian education. However, many people think that the Nisga'a do not have full control of education yet. The reasons which the people pointed out were varied. One of the main reasons is that because the Nisga'a school district is under the provincial system, they have to follow certain regulations. Another obstacle which keeps the Nisga'a from getting full control is the teachers' union. The union's strike which shut down the school for a few weeks is inconsistent with the Nisga'a educational philosophy where teaching is a gift.

Both in the school district and the WWN, there has been a fundamental problem, which is the fact that many of the aspects of education have been operated by non-Aboriginal educational values. Being in the provincial school

system, the Nisga'a have to follow the provincially prescribed curriculum. Although there is room for locally developed curriculum, which is the language and culture courses in the district, the ratio of the local curriculum to the provincial curriculum is quite low.

In addition to that, the provincial curriculum is culturally inappropriate for the Nisga'a. The curriculum represents a selection of knowledge by the most powerful class. The curriculum also teaches students hidden curriculum which perpetuates the unequal society. Although there is not clear evidence of the relationship between the culturally inappropriate curriculum and Nisga'a students' drop-out rate, some fundamental change in the curriculum is necessary.

One of the main goals for the future of Nisga'a education is total integration of the Nisga'a traditional culture and school education. They are now seeking a way to total integration.

For this total integration to be realized, a fundamental change is necessary. To make the fundamental change, as many Aboriginal people have been stressing, reviewing the Aboriginal traditional way of teaching must be taken into account. In the Nisga'a Nation, the four communities are all strong, and there are many knowledgeable elders in the communities. Since the society is strongly community-oriented, teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships can be very personal, which is indispensable for pedagogy. One of the forms of the fundamental change in education lies in the community.

However, the story of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) is a success story. The Nisga'a consciousness of educational issues is strong. As depicted in the earlier chapters, the Nisga'a consciousness and vision of decolonization, which are indispensable elements for decolonization, are very strong. As the Nisga'a closely examine the profound issues lying in the institutionalized educational

system, especially the issue of curriculum, and make changes, Nisga'a education will become more meaningful. Only the Nisga'a know what the Nisga'a way of teaching is, and through their success with their educational institutions, the Nisga'a are educating the younger generations to be Nisga'a in the twenty-first century.

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APPENDIX 1. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Anonymous

A language instructor (from New Aiyansh)

A grade-12 student of the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School (from New Aiyansh)

A Nisga'a woman (from Vancouver)

Identified

Casey, Robin

A grade-10 student of the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School (from New Aiyansh)

Clayton, Kathleen

A board member of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a
The chair of the Education Committee of the Gitlakdamiks Band Council
(from New Aiyansh)

Gonu, Charity

A student of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (from New Aiyansh)

Gonu, Cynthia

A student of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (from New Aiyansh)

Gonu, Ray

An instructor of the Adult Basic Education of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl
Nisga'a (from New Aiyansh)

Griffin, David

A teacher of the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School (from
Gitwinksihlkw)

Griffin, Irene

The education administrator of the Gitwinksihlkw Band Council (from
Gitwinksihlkw)

The vice-president technical, the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Interim
Board

Haizimisque, Ben

The president of the Parent Advisory Council (from New Aiyansh)

Mackenzie, John (Ian)

The chair person, the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (non-Nisga'a)

McKay, Alvin

The superintendent of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) and Schools (from Greenville)

McKay, Bert

The chair of the Ayuukhl Nisga'a

The acting advisor of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (from Greenville)

McKay, Jacob

The chair of the School Trustees

The vice-president academic, the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (from Greenville)

McMillan, Ed

The vice-principal of the Nisga'a Elementary and Secondary School (from New Aiyansh)

McMillan, Teresa

A teacher of the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School (from New Aiyansh)

Moore, Matt

The general manager of the Nisga'a Economic Enterprise Inc. (from Greenville)

Morven, Jonathan

A grade-7 student of the Nisga'a Elementary and Secondary School (from New Aiyansh)

Morven, Sharlene

A kindergarten teacher of the Nisga'a Elementary and Secondary School (from New Aiyansh)

Morven, Shirley

The district principal, the Nisga'a Language and Culture (from New Aiyansh)

Nyce, Deanna

The Chief Executive Officer of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (from Gitwinksihlkw)

Nyce, Dennis

A totem pole carver (from Gitwinksihlkw)

Nyce, Emma

A matriarch (from Gitwinksihlkw)

Nyce, Harry Jr.

A village administrator for the Gitwinksihlkw Band Council (from Gitwinksihlkw)

Nyce, Sally-Anne

An interim board member of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a representing the Nisga'a Valley Health Board (from Gitwinksihlkw, non-Nisga'a)
Student, Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a

Plante, Lorene

A board member of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a
The owner of Lorene's Bed and Breakfast (from New Aiyansh)

Robinson, Rosie

A language instructor of the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School
A language instructor of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (from New Aiyansh)

Seguin, Pat

The principal of the Gitwinksihlkw Elementary School (non-Nisga'a)

Tait, Marilyn A.

The administrative secretary of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (from New Aiyansh)

Tait, Percy

A Nisga'a Anglican Priest (from New Aiyansh)

Tindil, Art

The principal of the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School (non-Nisga'a)

Ueda, Tom

The assistant superintendent of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) and Schools (non-Nisga'a)

Welde, Laura

The education administrator of the Gitlakdamiks Band Council (from
New Aiyansh)

APPENDIX 2. CONSENT LETTER

Dear interview Participant:

The Ethics Committee of the University of Northern British Columbia requires that all interview participants sign a consent form before an interview.

I am conducting research in the Nass Valley for my graduate thesis focusing on Nisga'a education. The title of the thesis is *Aboriginal Education as a Decolonizing Method*. The research consists of both formal and informal interviews with the board members of School District No. 92 and the WWN, school teachers and principals, parents and grandparents, and secondary school students. In the thesis I will examine the following:

1. What is the Nisga'a definition of Indian control of Indian education?
2. What do the Nisga'a see as an ideal or model education for them?
3. What do the Nisga'a see as viable strategies to overcome current problems in reaching their model educational system?

If you agree to participate in an interview, you will be asked questions relevant to the above. I may quote this interview in the thesis. In that case, I would like to use your name in a respectful manner.

You have a right to refuse to answer any questions or to withdraw from the interview at any time without prejudice. You also have the freedom to be not identified.

If you agree to participate, please sign this letter and return it to me.

Yours sincerely,
M. Kiwako Okuma, Interviewer

I agree to participate in the interview under the condition described above. I am willing/ not willing to be identified.

Signature:

Date: / /

APPENDIX 3. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Board Members of School District No. 92 and the WWN

1. *Personal Information*

May I ask your full name?

How long have you been involved in Nisga'a education?

Could you tell me your background, if you don't mind?

2. *Schools*

Who is the founder (about money)?

How are the school principals and teachers hired?

Who develops the curriculum?

How are the board members selected?

How is the teacher-school board relationship?

Are there representatives of parents?

If there are any, how are they selected?

Are there PTA meetings?

If there are any, how often are they held?

3. *Control*

Are you familiar with the policy paper entitled "Indian Control of Indian Education" issued by NIB?

What is Indian control of Indian education for you?

Do you think the Nisga'a have full control of education?

If not, why and what are obstacles?

4. *Principles of Education*

Do you think there is still negative heritage left by the historical experience in the Past?

Why have the Nisga'a put stress on education so much?

In terms of education, what do you think are outstanding points for the Nisga'a?

How do you integrate formal education and informal education, in other words Nisga'a educational value ... and Euro-Canadian educational value ...

?

As a Nisga'a, what do you expect of children in the relationship with mainstream society?

What is your ideal of education in the Nass Valley?

To achieve your ideal goal, what do you think has to be done?

School Teachers

1. *Personal Information*

May I ask your full name?
How long have you been teaching here?
What are you teaching?
Have you taught at any other school before?

2. *Schools*

Do you find any difference between this school and other schools outside of the Nass Valley?
What do you think is the significance of the Nisga'a schools?
Do you find any negative heritage left by the historical experience in the past among students and parents?
If there is any, how can people overcome the difficulty?
Do you talk to parents often?
When you talk to parents, what are topics of your conversation?
Have you attended the PTA meetings?
What kind of things are discussed at the PTA meetings?

3. *Control*

Are you familiar with the policy paper entitled "Indian Control of Indian Education" issued by NIB?
What is Indian control of Indian education for you?
Do you think the Nisga'a have full control of education?
If not, why and what are obstacles?

4. *Principles of Education*

As a teacher, what is education?
What is your perception of informal education?
How do you integrate Nisga'a educational value with Euro-Canadian educational value ... ?
What do you expect of your students in the relationship with mainstream society?
What is your ideal of education in the Nass Valley?
To achieve your ideal goal, what do you think has to be done?

Parents and Grandparents

1. *Personal Information*

May I ask you full name?
How many children (or grandchildren) do you have?
How old are they?

2. *School Experience*

Could you tell me where you attended schools, if you don't mind?
How were the schools?

What are the negative points and positive points of your schooling?
Do you think the schooling in the past has major effects on the Nisga'a culture and society?
What are they?

3. *Control*

Are you familiar with the policy paper entitled "Indian Control of Indian Education" issued by NIB?
What is Indian control of Indian education for you?
Do you think the Nisga'a have full control of education?
If not, why and what are the obstacles?

4. *Daily Life*

Do you speak your mother tongue?
If yes, how often do you speak it?
Where does your income come from?
Do you attend traditional cultural activities?
If yes, what kind of activities do you attend?
Do you encourage your children (or grandchildren) to learn the Nisga'a traditional culture?
Do you teach the traditional culture to your children (or grandchildren)?

5. *Schools*

What do you think of having your own schools in your community?
Do you talk to school teachers about your children's education often?
If yes, what kind of things do you talk to teachers about?
Have you attended the PTA meetings?
What is discussed at the meetings?

6. *Principles of Education*

What is education for you?
Do you want your children (or grandchildren) to maintain the Nisga'a culture?
What is your ideal of education in the Nass Valley?
To achieve your ideal goal, what do you think has to be done?

Secondary School Students

1. *Personal Information*

May I ask your full name?
What grade are you in?
Have you been living here since you were born?
If not, where have you lived?
Whom do you live with?